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Maryvale Institute

**‘BE SEALED WITH THE GIFT OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT’**

**A theological analysis of the seal of the
Holy Spirit within the context of
confirmation catechesis**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree of
Ph.D. of the Open University**

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ABSTRACT

The revised Rite of Confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church uses *Accipe signaculum Doni Spiritus Sancti*, 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'¹ as its essential formula. By doing so it points to a wealth of Scriptural and Patristic doctrine which should help those being confirmed to appreciate what they are being given.

This thesis argues that these words contain a largely 'untapped' resource which is potentially valuable as part of the process of confirmation catechesis.

A survey suggests that published programmes for confirmation preparation, in use in England and Wales, do not help young people to understand the 'seal' of the Holy Spirit even though the Church is keen that they should². By changing the bishop's words to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit', the Rite of Confirmation, later supported by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), suggests that 'sealing' is central to the meaning of the sacrament of confirmation.

This thesis identifies a need for catechesis on the 'seal' of the Spirit. It draws on contemporary challenges to confirmation catechesis and discusses areas of dissonance between what young people are receiving from published confirmation preparation programmes and what the Church teaches.

The catechetical usefulness of the words 'be sealed with the gift of the Spirit' is justified through a thorough investigation into the historical and scriptural roots of the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω³ and related terms in order to establish a network of meanings that would have entered the consciousness of New Testament and Patristic writers. 'Sealing' is identified in

¹ 'The Rite of Confirmation' *The Rites of the Catholic Church as revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council* New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1976 p.301.

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1121, 1274, 1295, 1296, 1300 -1305.

³ The noun and verb forms of 'seal'.

key New Testament verses,⁴ and its use in rites of baptism traced. The evolution of a body of teaching about what it means to 'be sealed' in Christian initiation is explored with reference to the development of baptismal liturgies in the Western Church, which come to include rites of chrismation, until confirmation develops as a separate sacrament.⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas's teaching on the sacramental character is considered as a key connection between the 'seal' of baptism of the New Testament and the developed theology of the 'seal of the Spirit' of confirmation.

Four themes identified from CCC1121 as important for understanding the 'character' or 'seal', and hence confirmation, help link the research into the meaning of 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' to the discussion of how this formula may be explained in catechesis in a way that helps candidates appreciate the transforming effects of this sacrament.

The results of the research undertaken in this thesis are used to identify a theology of the seal and make recommendations for confirmation catechetical practice. These recommendations endeavour to build on good practice and catechetical content where it is identified and provide suggestions for ways in which young people can be enabled to embrace the meaning of 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' and apply it to their spiritual lives as they grow in conformity to Christ and face the challenges of being adult Christians.

⁴ Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; Rom.4:11; Jn 3:33, 6:27 and Rev. 7:2-8,9:4, 14:1.

⁵ Its status as a sacrament was defined at the Second Council of Lyons 1274.

ABBREVIATIONS

Scripture and Theology

LXX	<i>Septuagint</i>
NJB	<i>New Jerusalem Bible</i>
RSV	<i>Revised Standard Version of the Bible</i>
ST	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>

Catechisms

Cat. Trent	<i>Catechism of the Council of Trent</i>
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>

Church Fathers and Liturgy before the Twelfth Century

AC	<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>
Apol.	<i>First Apology</i> (Justin Martyr)
AT	<i>Apostolic Tradition</i>
B	<i>Bobbio Missal</i>
De Bapt.	<i>De Baptismo</i>
Cat.	<i>Catecheses</i> (Cyril of Jerusalem)
CH	<i>Canons of Hippolytus</i>
Gel.	<i>Gelasian Sacramentary</i>
JT	<i>Acts of Judas Thomas</i>
MC	<i>Mystagogical Catecheses</i>
De Myst.	<i>De Mysteriis</i>
O XI	<i>Ordo Romanus XI</i>

PG	<i>Migne, patrologia graeca</i>
PL	<i>Migne, patrologia latina</i>
De Res.	<i>De Resurrectione</i>
S	<i>Stowe Missal</i>
De Sac.	<i>De Sacramentis</i>

Modern Liturgy and Magisterial Documents

AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
CL	<i>Christefideles Laici</i>
CT	<i>Catechesi Tradendae</i>
DIM	<i>Divini Illius Magistri</i>
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>
FC	<i>Familiaris Consortio</i>
GDC	<i>General Directory of Catechesis</i>
GE	<i>Gravissimum Educationis</i>
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
RCIA	<i>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>
US	<i>Ubicumque et Semper</i>

Recent Research

EVS	<i>European Values Study</i>
PP08	<i>Pilgrims' Progress 2008</i>
RSInv-10	<i>Religious Status Inventory (short form)</i>

TRVS

Teenage Religion and Values Survey

Other

CBCEW

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

CRB

Criminal Records Bureau

CTS

Catholic Truth Society

CYM Fed

Catholic Youth Ministry Federation

HIREPL

Heythrop Institute of Religion Ethics and Public Life

NCCL

National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

USCCB

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops

WYD

World Youth Day

INTRODUCTION

The bishop's words in the Rite of Confirmation, *Accipe signaculum Doni Spiritus Sancti*, ('Receive the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit') are better known in the English speaking context in the form 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'.¹ This thesis argues that 'the seal of the Spirit'² is a largely 'untapped resource' from which candidates for confirmation would benefit if it formed part of the catechesis they receive in preparation for this sacrament.

The first question to consider is why the imagery of 'sealing' has returned to the Rite of Confirmation³. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* states that anointing with the words: *Signo te signo crucis et confirmo te Chrismate salutis...* ('I sign thee with the sign of the cross and I confirm thee with the Chrism of salvation...') confer on the recipient a 'strength of a new power'.⁴ Arguably the current Rite of Confirmation represents an attempt to reach back behind fifteen hundred years of stagnation with regard to the formula of confirmation in order to make more prominent the imagery of 'sealing', and perhaps to bring the Western formula of confirmation closer to the Eastern formula of Chrismation. An examination of why, during the 1960's, the Church felt it necessary to change the bishop's words at confirmation, and what 'receive the seal...' conveys that 'I sign thee...' in the previous rite did not, is essential if we are to develop principles for testing the argument of this research.

1 'The Rite of Confirmation.' *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*. New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1976, p. 301.

2 The term 'seal of the Spirit' has been chosen as it translates *Signaculum Spiritus Sancti*. The most relevant New Testament texts (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13. 4:30) speak of *being sealed* with the Holy Spirit. 'Seal of the Spirit' is the title of Lampe's book which investigates the relation of σφραγίς and *signaculum* to baptism and confirmation (Lampe, G.H.W. *The Seal of the Spirit*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), and is used by Martos in his discussion of the sacramental seal (Martos, J. *Doors to the Sacred: A historical introduction to the sacraments of the Catholic Church*. Missouri: Ligouri/ Triumph, 2001, p.35). St. Ambrose uses the formula *signaculum spiritale* in *De Mysteriis* 7:42 which is quoted in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1303 in relation to confirmation. 'Seal of the Spirit' is therefore used in quotation marks in this thesis to refer to the whole complex of relevant formulae, concepts and texts, including those texts that employ verbal forms.

3 Chapter 5 investigates 'sealing' in early post-baptismal rites. 'Sealing' as an explicit term gradually disappeared in Western rites as confirmation emerged as a separate sacrament, but was retained in the Byzantine Rite.

4 *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, translated by McHugh, J., O.P. and Callan, C., O.P. New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1923, p.199.

That the Rite of Confirmation was revised to unite it more closely to baptism and the Eucharist as the constituent sacraments in the complete process of Christian initiation is clearly stated by the Second Vatican Council :

The Rite of Confirmation is to be revised also so that the intimate connection of this sacrament with the whole of the Christian initiation may more clearly appear.⁵

The *Apostolic Constitution* promulgating the current rite of confirmation states the Church's desire to locate confirmation more explicitly within the process of Christian initiation:

The link between confirmation and the other sacraments of initiation is shown forth more clearly not only by closer association of these sacraments but also by the rite and words by which confirmation is conferred. This is done so that the rite and words of this sacrament may "express more clearly the holy things which they signify."⁶

The *Apostolic Constitution* draws on *Lumen Gentium* to summarise the effects of confirmation:

Through the sacrament of confirmation, those who have been born anew in baptism receive the inexpressible Gift, the Holy Spirit himself, by which "they are endowed... with special strength." Moreover, having received the character of this sacrament, they are "bound more intimately to the Church" and "they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith both by word and by deed as true witnesses of Christ."⁷

The *Apostolic Constitution* goes on to express the close bonds between confirmation and Eucharist in stating that the newly confirmed are 'incorporated fully into the body of Christ by participation in the Eucharist'.⁸

The Introduction to the Rite of Confirmation says (in the English translation) that 'the whole rite has a twofold meaning', though the Latin (*duplicem significationem praebe*t) might be translated 'offers its symbolism in two ways.' These are: (a) the laying on of hands by the bishop and the concelebrants, a biblical gesture, expresses *the invocation of the gift of the Holy*

5 Second Vatican Council, 'Sacrosanctum Concilium', no. 71: Flannery A. (ed.) *Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1981, p.22.

6 'The Rite of Confirmation' 1976, pp.290-291, quoting SC no. 21.

7 'Rite of Confirmation' 1976 p.292, quoting LG no. 11. See also CCC 1121,1304, 1305.

8 'Rite of Confirmation' 1976 p.292. The Church's teaching on the order of sacraments expressed here is seldom practised.

Spirit; (b) the anointing with chrism and the accompanying words ‘express clearly *the effects* of the giving of the Holy Spirit,’ namely ‘the indelible character, the seal of the Lord,’ a closer conformity to Christ, and the grace to diffuse the good odour of Christ. However, it seems to be implied that the anointing with chrism and the words also express *the gift of the Spirit himself*, who conforms the candidates to Christ and graces them.⁹

The revised Rite for the Consecration of the Chrism has retained largely unchanged the prayer previously in use, as one option alongside a newly composed prayer. The former prayer speaks of those confirmed as *regio et sacerdotali propheticoque honore perfusi* (‘imbued with royal, priestly and prophetic honour’).¹⁰

Thus the form (words spoken by the Bishop), matter (oil of Chrism), and gestures of confirmation, are held to comprise a sign that can speak eloquently to the confirmands, and the consecration of the chrism brings out a further dimension to the dignity the sacrament confers. We will see in Chapter 5 how the scholastic theology of sacramental character also affirmed that those confirmed share in Christ’s priesthood. But to what extent do contemporary confirmands actually know, theoretically, and understand, spiritually, that they are being ‘sealed’ or ratified as initiated members of the Church, ready to share fully in Christ’s priesthood, kingship and mission as prophet? How far are candidates for confirmation enabled to internalise the Church’s teaching that they are now indelibly marked yet more firmly as belonging to God, and to relate it to the way they live their lives? This thesis arises out of the conjecture that confirmation catechesis, in England and Wales, may not fully convey what the Church expresses in the Rite of Confirmation or teaches in her official documents, and that the Church’s decision to revise the bishop’s words at confirmation to ‘be sealed with the gift of the

⁹ ‘Rite of Confirmation’ 1976, p.301. The Latin text is published in *Notitiae* VII (1971) 340-346. The reference to ‘the good odour of Christ’ (2 Cor. 2:15) is obscured by the English translation.

¹⁰ *Ordo Benedicendi Oleum Catechumenorum et Infirmorum et Conficiendi Chrisma*. Vatican: Polyglot Press, 1971, §25, p.15.

Holy Spirit' has not been fully followed up in the catechetical process of confirmation preparation. This thesis intends to bring out the meaning of 'sealing' and identify its value as a catechetical resource. It will employ the four catechetical themes here set out, both as a 'diagnostic tool' and as indicators for how to connect 'sealing' to confirmation preparation and to the post-confirmation lives of the newly confirmed.

Four 'Catechetical Themes' to do with 'Sealing', derived from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders confer, in addition to grace, a sacramental *character* or 'seal' by which the Christian shares in Christ's priesthood and is made a member of the Church according to different states and functions. This configuration to Christ and to the Church, brought about by the Spirit, is indelible; it remains for ever in the Christian as a positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. Therefore these sacraments can never be repeated.¹¹

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1121 equates 'sacramental character' with 'seal', with reference to the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation and holy orders; all three are 'transforming' sacraments which bring about an ontological change which can neither be repeated or undone. CCC 1304 also equates 'character' with 'seal', and refers to Lk. 24:48-49 to teach that Christ marking someone with the 'seal' of his Spirit is Christ clothing that person with 'power from on high so that he may be his witness'. CCC 1296 recalls John 6:27 to show that Christ was sealed by the Father, and refers to Paul¹² to explain that Christians are also 'sealed'. In such ways CCC connects 'sealing' to its place in the New Testament. And our investigation of the 'seal' of confirmation will rely on a detailed scrutiny of the New Testament texts.

¹¹ CCC 1121.

¹² 2 Cor. 1:21-22, cf. Eph. 1:13, 4:30.

It will also rely on teaching about ‘sealing’ in the Fathers. CCC 1274 says that the ‘seal of the Lord’ is ‘for the day of redemption’ and ‘the seal of eternal life’, with reference to Augustine and Irenaeus.¹³ CCC 1303 quotes Ambrose: ‘you have received the spiritual seal... Christ the Lord has confirmed you and placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts’.¹⁴

Of these two passages, CCC 1274 is on baptism, and CCC 1303 on confirmation, for in fact we must investigate the meaning of the *baptismal* ‘seal’ since the origins of confirmation seem to lie in *baptismal* rites, out of which it gradually emerged as a separate sacrament, even though significant scholars have maintained that confirmation was celebrated as a distinct rite in and from New Testament times. It would require another dissertation to explore the legitimacy of attaching to *confirmation* a theology of the seal that arguably developed as part of a theology of *baptism*. CCC shows that the Church does wish to do this. And the recent re-emphasizing of the connection between confirmation and baptism¹⁵ as an integral part of the process of Christian initiation may suggest a way to legitimise the extension of the theology of the seal from baptism to confirmation.

Clearly CCC 1121, quoted above, does not stand alone but is one of several catechetical texts which place references to ‘seal’ and ‘character’ in the wider body of teaching that surrounds it. CCC 1121 serves this thesis by suggesting four catechetical themes to do with sealing, which can be used as a diagnostic tool and a peg from which to hang arguments for the catechetical usefulness of the concept of ‘sealing’. None of these four themes are mutually exclusive, and all include conformity to Christ as priest, prophet and king.

¹³ Augustine, *Letter* 98, 5; Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 3.

¹⁴ Ambrose, *De Mysteriis* 7, 42.

¹⁵ For example, CCC 1305 emphasizes that the ‘character’ of confirmation perfects the baptismal priesthood and confers power to witness to Christ publicly, referring for this to St. Thomas Aquinas, ST III, 72, 5 ad 2. See also CCC 1212.

(1) Belonging. The first catechetical theme is that sealing confers a permanent mark of identity as belonging to God. The phrase ‘a sacramental *character* or “seal”,’ calls on the theology of ‘character’ as a permanent ‘imprint’, and suggests the use of seals to mark objects, animals and human beings as someone’s property. But the phrase ‘a positive disposition for grace’ recalls how in general sacramental theology character is *res et sacramentum*, not only a permanent change, but also a permanent resource to be drawn on for on-going grace, empowering the Christian in conformity to Christ. This suggests the seal is not only ‘ontological’ but the ratification of a *personal relationship* with God, through the gift of the Holy Spirit which is freely given.

(2) Authentication. The second catechetical theme of ‘sealing’ is therefore that of authentication. As ‘configuration to Christ and to the Church’, the sacramental seal marks someone out as a Christian who shares in Christ’s priesthood, and as ‘a member of the Church according to different states and functions’. Sealing confers *a permanent mark of identity* as belonging to God and the community.

(3) A Down-Payment of Salvation. The phrase ‘... a promise and guarantee of divine protection’ suggests the third catechetical theme, the connection between the ‘seal’ and the gift of the Spirit who is a ‘down-payment’ on salvation. This thesis shall need to consider the relation between σφραγίς, ‘seal’, and ἀρραβών, ‘guarantee’, within the understanding that all sacraments signify Christ’s promised kingdom.

(4) Post-Confirmation Mission in Conformity to Christ. ‘...as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church’ points to the fourth catechetical theme related to ‘sealing’: a permanent configuration to Christ as priest, prophet and servant-king which implies a vocation of worship and of public mission in the Church. The newly confirmed are strengthened for this by the ‘seal’ of the Spirit.

Four catechetical themes related to ‘sealing’ have therefore been identified, which summarise how sealing bestows a permanent imprint which marks one out as claimed by God, protected for the final judgement in the hope of salvation, and granted a new spiritual power. This seal, a supernatural gift from God, as permanent, is present in the recipient from the moment of ‘sealing’, and as *res et sacramentum* it allows for consciousness of it to be realized at any time. These themes are ‘catechetical’ because of the insight they provide into the meaning of the phrase ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’ and because they echo a rich tradition of theology associated with ‘sealing’.

The four themes have been used to give structure to an ‘opportunity survey’ which indicates people’s understanding of the meaning of the bishop’s words ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’.¹⁶ By provoking the following questions the themes have helped the exploration of what that tradition to do with ‘sealing’ is, and help us see it as a resource for confirmation catechesis.

The first theme asks ‘what is the seal?’ In response we shall look at its etymological, historical and theological background and so elicit catechetically useful imagery. The second theme asks ‘what does it authenticate and how?’ This prompts examination of historical and scriptural evidence of sealing as authentication, and suggests further ideas for catechesis on the gift of the Holy Spirit. The third theme asks ‘how does ‘sealing’ relate to God’s promise of salvation?’ The answer is particularly grounded in New Testament and early Church teaching, and can ‘broaden the horizon’ of catechesis about the effects of confirmation. The fourth theme asks ‘what is the calling of those who are sealed, and what responsibilities are expected of them?’ Findings relating to this theme shall be applied particularly to catechesis about

¹⁶ A summary of this survey can be found in appendix 1.

sharing in Christ's ministry as priest, prophet and king, and stand to enrich the newly confirmed individual's sense of post-confirmation mission in the Church.

These four themes are shown in the account of the appearance of the Holy Spirit like a dove at Christ's baptism¹⁷, and the Father's words: 'this is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him'.¹⁸ Thus Christ's identity was ratified by the Father, who owned him as Son, the gift of the Spirit was manifest, and Christ's mission for the Church was inaugurated:

Christ himself declared that he was marked with his Father's seal. Christians are also marked with a seal: "It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us; he has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrolment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial.¹⁹

Approach

The following investigation into the scriptural and historical background of 'sealing' is underpinned by the four themes identified above. Its purpose is to justify the argument that the words 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' would be better understood by confirmands and applied to their post-confirmation lives more fruitfully if the theology of sealing and of what it means to be conformed to Christ were included appropriately in the confirmation preparation process.

The bishop's words 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' have already been placed in the context of modern Church teaching with the help of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and official documents about the liturgy of confirmation.

Reference materials such as encyclopaedias and lexicons have helped establish sources and support an investigation into Greek terms relating to sealing and into how these have evolved

¹⁷ Matt 3:16-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-34.

¹⁸ Matt. 3:17.

¹⁹ CCC 1296, quoting Jn. 6:27 and 2 Cor. 1:21-22.

to create a theological background of concepts of the 'seal of the Spirit' in the New Testament. Books from the mid-twentieth century to the current decade and journal articles written in the last twenty years have been consulted.²⁰ The range of genre and time span of this literature is largely an outcome of the fact that relatively little has been published which pertains directly to the 'seal of the Spirit' in Christian confirmation catechesis. This is brought out in more detail in the Literature Survey that precedes Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

²⁰ Books are used as far as possible. Where internet sites are used, peer reviewed sites are preferred and other sites cross-referenced to check validity. Wiki sites are not used.

LITERATURE SURVEY

Overview

Relatively little has been published that focuses specifically on 'sealing' in relation to Christian initiation. Writers such as Lampe¹, Daniélou,² and Ysebaert,³ have focused on 'sealing', but no recent author has applied the scriptural and historical background of 'sealing' to catechesis as this research sets out to do.

There is considerable material on the history and theology of confirmation and on confirmation catechesis, with the catechetical materials sometimes reflecting a general discomfort about how best to present a 'theology' of confirmation. The current liturgy of confirmation and the official theology reflected in the apostolic constitution⁴ and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points us back to the New Testament and the Fathers, so we have to explore the New Testament background and use of 'seal' in the Fathers and the development of the liturgy to show how confirmation 'inherits' a theology of the seal that arguably developed prior to a recognizable rite of confirmation and the medieval theology of confirmation which expresses a 'sacramental character' that preserves some of that theology. From here we can investigate what the theology of the 'seal' can contribute to confirmation catechesis on the premise that the Church was correct in attaching this theology to confirmation.

¹ Lampe, G.H.W. *The Seal of the Spirit*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1951.

² Daniélou, J. *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964.

³ Ysebaert, J. *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, Nijmegen: Dekker and van de Vegt, 1962.

⁴ *The Rite of Confirmation* *The Rites of the Catholic Church as revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council* New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1976.

Major and General Studies

Lampe⁵ is a much cited forerunner in the field of work on the 'seal of the Spirit' and his appraisal of the antecedents of Christian understanding of 'the seal of the Spirit' as a sign or imprint of belonging to God for identity and protection has been widely drawn on by subsequent writers. Lampe develops the connection between sealing, anointing and αρραβών, and differentiates between the metaphorical and ritual uses of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω. He points out the risk of over-simplification met by those who try to equate sealing with confirmation in order to understand the 'bewildering variety of meaning' of seal in the Fathers'.⁶

Lampe demonstrates that 'sealing' refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism and there is no clear rite of confirmation or 'Spirit-baptism' in the New Testament to which 'sealing' might be attached. Lampe maintains that baptism effects a real change in the recipient and that the laying on of hands is a forerunner to the sacraments of confirmation and holy orders, and provides a beginning for the commissioning of bishops, priest and deacons.⁷ The mid-twentieth century debate over whether 'sealing' is baptism or confirmation is considered in the light of Lampe's argument and that of his opponents, such as Dix,⁸ Mason⁹, Wirgman¹⁰ and Lambert¹¹ who maintain that 'sealing' always was confirmation. As a main critic of the view that σφραγίς is anything other than baptism, Lampe¹² equates σφραγίς both 'in its primary

⁵ Lampe *The Seal of the Spirit*.

⁶ Lampe *The Seal of the Spirit* p.7.

⁷ Lampe *The Seal of the Spirit* p.70-71.

⁸ Dix, G. 'The Seal in the Second Century' *Theology*, vol.51, no. 331, (1948) p.7-12. Dix, G. *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd Ed. London: Dacre Press, Adam and Charles Black 1945 (It is a credit to the relevance of this book to modern times that it has been republished by Continuum, 2005). Dix, G. *The Theology of Confirmation in relation to Baptism* Westminster: Dacre Press, Adam and Charles Black 1946. Dix, G. *Jew and Greek: A Study in the Primitive Church* Westminster: Dacre Press, Adam and Charles Black 1953.

⁹ Mason, A.J. *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism as taught in Holy Scripture and the Fathers* London, Longmans, Green and Co. 1891.

¹⁰ Wirgman, A.T. *The Doctrine of Confirmation* London, Longmans, Green and Co. 1902.

¹¹ Lambert, J.C. *The Sacraments in the New Testament: Kerr Lectures* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1903.

¹² Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, p.108.

religious significance¹³ as an inward mark or imprint of belonging to God and as the spiritual effects of baptism detailed by Paul (2 Cor.1:21-22; Eph.1:13 and 4:30). The 'Mason-Dix line'¹⁴ identifies σφραγίς with confirmation and holds that water baptism could only be completed through sealing with the Holy Spirit at confirmation¹⁵. This view was challenged and dismissed by many opponents, the most influential of which was Lampe¹⁶. Although there is no separate rite of confirmation in the New Testament to support the view of Mason and Dix, Lampe's opinion that there are no grounds in the New Testament for distinguishing between water baptism and Spirit-baptism needs further consideration. Lampe shows awareness of the complexity of meaning attached to the terms 'seal', 'sign' and 'character', although his Anglican theology does not allow for the Scholastic distinctions of χαρακτήρ as a specific ontological change imparted at baptism and confirmation.

Ysebaert¹⁷ provides a substantial examination of the secular, Old and New Testament background of sealing and distinguishes between sealing and secular marking. Ysebaert represents those who maintain that a distinctive Christian rite for conferring the Spirit had always existed. He describes the 'seal' of circumcision (Rom. 4:11) as 'confirming' the covenant and 'concluding' justification as it ratified the covenant with Abraham who had already received faith (Gen. 17:11). This implies that receiving the Spirit in Paul is linked to justification and therefore baptism. It also suggests 'sealing' might be a concluding rite which

¹³ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, p.5.

¹⁴ This pun is quoted by Kavanagh *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation*, New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1978 p.87. It is unknown who first coined this phrase, but perhaps it is too obvious to attribute to a single user and too catchy to resist.

¹⁵ The Catechism states that confirmation completes baptism (CCC1304). The meaning is not that baptism is incomplete, but that the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist together form Christian initiation (CCC 1275).

¹⁶ The debate that ensued had far reaching effects. During the mid-twentieth century, some influential Protestant theologians were similarly engaged in debate over the age of baptism. Both these debates were to have an impact on Catholic discussions on baptism and confirmation prior to the announcement of the Second Vatican Council in 1959.

¹⁷ Ysebaert, *Baptismal Terminology*.

is emphasized in Ysebaert's claim that a 'distinction'¹⁸ must be made between baptismal immersion and post-baptismal rites which confer gift of the Spirit. Ysebaert's argument that manumission, anointing and sealing comprise one rite seems to presuppose confirmation, but he has not demonstrated that confirmation has always existed as a separate rite. His claim that a rite for giving the Spirit, distinct from water baptism was there from the beginning is not widely supported and seems to contradict Lampe's position that sealing is baptism. Ysebaert states that the Spirit was only ever given *after* baptism with reference to the Spirit descending after Christ's baptism. His claim that σφραγίζειν in Paul refers to a post-baptismal rite lacks evidence to prove it.¹⁹ Ysebaert's argument neither takes into account baptismal references to rebirth in water *and the Spirit* nor to the ambiguity over the moment the Spirit is conferred in different baptismal rites²⁰ described in the Fathers. His view that χρίσμα as a metaphor for the Spirit, conferred through material anointing, is at odds with his attention to the anointing of Elisha, and of the prophet in Isaiah 61:1, as not involving oil.²¹ Ysebaert's terminology for early rites involving ἔλαιον (oil) allows us to consider how pre-baptismal anointing may have originated in ancient Syriac rites before it became established in the Western Church. Ysebaert maintains that pre-baptismal anointing signifies a mark of ownership, forgiveness, and 'indwelling of God'²² and that the possibility of the gift of the Holy Spirit being conferred in Syriac pre-baptismal anointing was transferred to post-baptismal rites in the Western Church. More recent writers about confirmation often cite Lampe amongst their sources and lead us further into key issues such as how confirmation can be a sacrament if Lampe is right and what constitutes the 'seal of the Spirit'. Kavanagh²³ discusses the historical background to

¹⁸ Ysebaert, *Baptismal Terminology*, p.181.

¹⁹ Ysebaert, *Baptismal Terminology*, p. 265.

²⁰ Discussed in chapter 5.

²¹ Ysebaert, *Baptismal Terminology*, p.263.

²² Ysebaert, *Baptismal Terminology*, p 314.

²³ Kavanagh, Aidan. *The Shape of Baptism; Confirmation: Origins and Reform*, New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1988.

‘sealing’ in the early liturgies of Christian initiation and explores the connections between traditions, practice and symbolism of ‘sealing’ from the Old and New Testaments, baptism and confirmation. Kavanagh’s work is potentially useful for finding an answer to why attitudes of modern theologians to the pioneering work in the field of ‘sealing’ of authors such as Lampe, Mason and Dix have become increasingly critical and why the mid-twentieth century debate over the extent to which σφραγίς can be equated with baptism or confirmation may still affect contemporary Christian understanding of the meaning of the ‘seal of the Spirit’.

Neunheuser’s²⁴ work on the development of doctrine in baptism and confirmation informs us about the relation between ‘sealing’ and Christian initiation, with reference to the development of baptismal liturgies from the second century to the Council of Trent. Neunheuser discusses confirmation in general terms, rather than focussing on the ‘seal’, synthesizes patristic texts and provides an overview of the scholastic thinking which surrounded the emergence of confirmation as a separate sacrament.

Joseph Martos²⁵ investigates the background of the sacraments with a short section on the sacramental seal. His key interest is in making sacramental mysteries more accessible to Christian readers of today, and he comments on the Greek intellectual heritage of Christian thinking as well as the meaning of the sacramental seal in the New Testament. Although it provides a modern view on the historical roots of ‘sealing’, this text gives little consideration to Christian rites of initiation. Some of Martos’s comments have been discarded due to lack of reference to his sources.

²⁴ Neunheuser, B. *Baptism and Confirmation* London: Burns and Oates 1964.

²⁵ Martos, J. *Doors to the Sacred: A historical introduction to sacraments in the Catholic Church* Missouri: Ligouri/Triumph revised and updated edition (2001)p. 32 – 39.

Quinn²⁶ believes that confusion between confirmation as a post-baptismal rite and as an affirmation of baptismal promises underlies a lack of purpose in modern Catholic rites of confirmation and stems from the separation of rites of baptism and post-baptismal chrismation. His paper builds on differences between Patristic baptismal liturgies with little attention to shared sources or similarities. Perhaps this view is influenced by his consideration of the *Apostolic Tradition* as the origin of Roman rites and lack of attention to parity between the rites of Rome and those of Milan. Quinn's view is that post-baptismal episcopal rites became the centre for the Holy Spirit 'very early on'.²⁷ He maintains that the Church could only fully understand post-baptismal rites which focus on the Spirit when Christian initiation took place in a single series of rites presided over by the bishop. Quinn is not the first. Kelly²⁸ justifies 'confusion' by stating even if it appeared that both baptism and chrismation conferred the gift of the Holy Spirit, it did not present a problem as long as there remained one sacrament of initiation. Quinn draws attention to the 'modern aberration'²⁹ of writers such as Dix who separate confirmation from baptism by attaching the Spirit's role to post-baptismal rites. Quinn describes the reform of the rite of confirmation in 1971 as an attempt to provide a theology of confirmation, despite its contradictory history, with a greater emphasis on the spiritual 'strengthening' of the medieval rites. He argues that confirmation can only be fully understood in conjunction with baptism and the Eucharist. It was never meant to be a catechetical rite of the renewal of baptismal promises but should provide for Christians a way to rediscover their lives in Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Nowhere does Quinn discuss 'sealing' but his article sums up many doubts and contradictions expressed elsewhere less specifically. We shall endeavour to discover how the 'seal of the Spirit' and its

²⁶ Quinn, Frank, C. 'Confirmation, does it make sense?' *Ecclesia Orans* V (1988) 321-340.

²⁷ Quinn 'Confirmation' p.329.

²⁸ Kelly J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrines* 5th, revised edition. London: Continuum 1977.p.435.

²⁹ Quinn 'Confirmation' p.327.

relation to baptism and confirmation can be used catechetically in response to some of the problems that Quinn has identified.

Turner³⁰ explores Catholic, Anglican and Protestant models of confirmation, and discusses images of 'sealing'. By contrasting past and present adolescent confirmation rites, Turner emphasizes the need for maturity to witness to Christ and the importance that confirmation is seen as a 'rite of commitment'.³¹ Turner argues that throughout Church history baptized Christian children were seldom required to make an adult profession of faith, because many would not have renewed their baptismal promises.³² In fact, renewal of baptismal promises did not come in to the rite until the new 'Rite of Confirmation' in the 1970s. Turner explains Aquinas' theology of *χαρakter* as maturity to bear witness to Christ publicly. He describes the sacramental character of confirmation as 'related to the concept of the seal in the theology of confirmation'³³, although it is likely that by 'confirmation' he is referring also to chrismation. In a catechetical sense, Turner suggests that the sacramental seal of confirmation confers a gift that is grace, freely given by God out of love for his people for their eternal salvation. This gift requires a response of conformity to Christ in Catholic adolescent confirmation.

³⁰ Turner, Paul, *Confirmation: The Baby in Solomon's Court* New York: Paulist Press, 1993.

³¹ Turner, *The Baby in Solomon's Court* p.92.

³² We can agree that sometimes chrismation or confirmation was deferred because of the need to wait for a bishop, or that chrismation was conferred on infants such as evidenced in the *Ordo Romanus XI* (in Whitaker, E.C. (ed) *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy* London: S.P.C.K. 1970 p.196 – 204) but evidence from baptismal liturgies from the third to eighth centuries suggests that many Christians did make an adult profession of faith because they were baptised and anointed with chrism as adults and therefore Turner's statement about initiation of children is not taken as typical.

³³ Turner, *The Baby in Solomon's Court* p.93.

The historical and scriptural background of 'the seal of the Spirit'

A search of archaeological journals has revealed the development of religious and secular practices of 'sealing' from 1,000 – 500BC. Albenda's³⁴ argument that early stone seals provided more than the mark of ownership, but were a reflection of their owner's identity, suggests how sealing may be understood in Old Testament writings. Knapp's discussion of seals found at Knossos³⁵ illustrates the Greek origins of the practice of sealing and how ancient Near Eastern and early Greek practice fused with traditions and practice from Palestine.

Lemaire's³⁶ interpretation of North West Semitic seals of the fifth century BC and their function amongst priests and high ranking military officials contrasts with Woodcock who cites Herodotus³⁷ information that seals were used by ordinary people.

A series of articles on circumcision helps us understand the relation between circumcision, covenant and being 'sealed' into a relationship with God. Wyatt³⁸ reconstructs the development of circumcision rites as a mark of a covenant which is continually renewed between God and his people. Goldingay³⁹ and Wyatt agree that the origins of circumcision lie in fertility rites. Goldingay emphasises the 'creative purpose' of circumcision in the Old Testament whereas Wyatt argues that circumcision is also redemptive. Wyatt's view suggests there may be a connection between circumcision and the meanings attached both to σφραγίς and ἀρραβών. Goldingay focuses on the social function of the physical rite of circumcision as a sign of membership of a male dominated community and adds little to the argument that

³⁴ Albenda, P. 'Of Gods, Men and Monsters on Assyrian Seals', *Biblical Archaeologist* 41, (Mar 1978) p.17-22.

³⁵ Knapp, B. 'Bronze Age Mediterranean Cultures and the Ancient Near East' *Biblical Archaeologist* 55, (2003) p.112-128.

³⁶ Lemaire, A. 'Recherches Actuelles sur les Sceaux Nord-Ouest Semitiques' *Vetus Testamentum* XXXVIII, 2, (April 1988) p. 220-224.

³⁷ Woodcock, Eldon. 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155, (April-June 1998) p.139 -163.

³⁸ Wyatt, N. 'Circumcision and Circumstance: male genital mutilation in Ancient Israel and Ugarit' *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33.4 (2009) p.405-431.

³⁹ Goldingay, J. 'The significance of circumcision' *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 88, (2000) p.3-18.

circumcision has a role what it means to 'be sealed' into a relationship with God. Theissen⁴⁰ maintains that the key to understanding circumcision is Genesis 17:14 and this is often overlooked by scholars using modern biblical translations. Theissen uses the Hebrew text and the Septuagint to evidence his claim that Genesis 17 is the only Hebrew biblical text which 'provides an explicit rationale for Israel's performance of circumcision on male infants'.⁴¹ Furthermore, Theissen's work emphasizes the synonymy of circumcision with covenant and redemption. Theissen argues that the Septuagint phrase which translates as 'on the eighth day'⁴² confirms that the rite in Genesis 17 was infant circumcision and the consequences of not circumcising boys on the eighth day translates as 'that soul shall be cut off from his people for he has broken my covenant.'⁴³ Theissen's hypothesis challenges Goldingay's suggestion that circumcision was not connected to the covenant before the relatively late Priestly authorship of Genesis 17 by suggesting that it could have been the product of an earlier writer. Wyatt asserts that circumcision was an infant rite in Genesis 17 with reference to 17:12 and Isaac's circumcision (Gen. 21:4) but that infant circumcision was not the original pattern, thus maintaining the validity of his argument. Theissen's work however points to fragments from Qumran. Although these are unlikely to point directly to earlier Hebrew writings than Genesis, Theissen suggests that the origins of circumcision lie in earlier Hebrew writings.

⁴⁰ Theissen, M. 'The text of Genesis 17:14' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128.4 (2009) p.625-642.

⁴¹ Theissen, 'The text of Genesis 17:14' p.625.

⁴² LXX Gen.17:14.

⁴³ LXX Gen. 17:14 quoted in Thiessen, 'The text of Genesis 17:14' p.626.

Seal in the New Testament

Woodcock⁴⁴ contributes to New Testament scholarship on the meaning of 'seal of the Spirit'. He considers the moment of conversion to be 'sealing', not baptism. He gives references for the origins of the term σφραγίς and σφραγίζω and provides a general impression of some of the more salient features underpinning the historical traditions of sealing and its scriptural meaning in Paul. Woodcock focuses on what it means to Christians to be 'sealed with the Holy Spirit' with sealing as: inaccessibility; authorization; ownership and protection. He cites Ahern⁴⁵ to draw links between σφραγίς and ἀρραβών and sees 'being sealed' in Paul as a pledge of God's redemption for those who belong to him. Woodcock does not address the 'seal of the Spirit' as a catechetical resource; the catechetical potential of the connection between a seal and this guarantee of salvation is yet to be developed.

Kavanagh and Daniélou consider 'sealing' in relation to Judeo-Christian rites of initiation and early Christian baptism. Daniélou's focused approach to Judaeo-Christianity, his wide use of pre-Christian non-canonical texts and the association of *signatio* and σφραγίς with the Name of God contributes to the theological thinking that underpins the Christianization of rites involving 'sealing'. He examines the baptismal rite of 'sealing' as the imprint of the 'seal' and the instrument of sealing. He refers to Paul's use of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω (Eph. 1:13; 1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 1:22) and draws connections between Paul's baptismal symbolism and the Roman practice of 'sealing' military recruits. Daniélou also discusses the baptismal symbolism of σφραγίς in connection with the sign of *Tau* and suggests how this became associated with the cross. Thus, he builds on links drawn by Lampe between σφραγίς and *signum/signaculum*, and moreover, considers the relation between the terms σφραγίς and εικόν.

⁴⁴ Woodcock, 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit'.

⁴⁵ Ahern, B. 'The indwelling Spirit, pledge of our inheritance (Eph.1:14)', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 9 (1947) P.179-189.

O'Neill⁴⁶ and Congar⁴⁷ provide a more detailed consideration than Lampe of the relation between the 'seal' and the gift of the Spirit in the light of Luke's soteriology and early Christian baptismal concepts and practice. Congar interprets Pauline theology of the Holy Spirit in which Christians are 'sealed', and discusses Paul's influence during the early Church's transition from its Jewish roots to universal Christianity. Congar's detailed portrayal of sealing with the Holy Spirit in relation to baptismal symbolism and practice provides a background against which O'Neill's argument shall be investigated.

O'Neill argues that apparent anomalies in baptismal practice identified in the Acts of the Apostles may be accounted for by different sources used by Luke. O'Neill provides a different perspective from the writers of the early to mid-twentieth century by drawing on Old Testament symbolism and traditions which associate water and fire as destructive and salvific images of the Holy Spirit.

Fee⁴⁸ applies structural and grammatical analysis to Pauline texts including Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. He uses the historical background of 'seal' as an imprint in wax and connects 'sealing' to ownership, guarantee and down-payment on the future time. He claims that 'anointed' in 2 Corinthians 1:22 is a Pauline play on words because Paul is thinking of the indwelling Spirit: εἰς χριστὸν καὶ χάρις ἡμᾶς therefore sets the scene for the 'confirmation metaphors'⁴⁹ of sealing and down-payment. Fee claims that the 'seal' is the Spirit, which is both proof of Paul's apostleship (2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30),⁵⁰ authentication of the people chosen and empowered by God (Eph.4:30) and the eschatological

⁴⁶ O'Neill, J.C. 'The Connection between Baptism and the Gift of the Spirit in Acts', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 63 (1996) p. 87 – 103.

⁴⁷ Congar, Y. *I believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 1: The Experience of the Spirit* London: Chapman 1983.

Congar, Y. *I believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. 2: Lord and Giver of Life* London: Chapman 1983.

⁴⁸ Fee, Gordon D. *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994.

⁴⁹ Fee *God's Empowering Presence* p.291.

⁵⁰ 1 Cor. 9:2 clearly authenticates Paul's apostleship but is not included in Fee's text.

pledge for Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity (2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14). He associates anointing in Paul with Jesus and the gift of the Spirit but he differentiates this from baptism. Fee states that the 'seal' is baptism from around the first century, but maintains that the 'seal' is a metaphor for the Spirit and not baptism in Paul.

Nocent⁵¹ points to Romans 6:3-7 as the key text on baptism in which the reality of sacramental sharing in the Spirit is made present through the 'sign' of dying and rising with Christ. He draws Paul's use of Old Testament typology into an understanding of baptism as 'sealing' with a distinguishable mark and connects it to Paul's teaching that those marked by the Spirit share in one body. Nocent states that Paul was not necessarily recalling a water-rite in Romans 6 but clarifies that 'baptism' in 1 Corinthians 12:13 clearly depicts the process of initiation. In contrast to Fee, who does not connect 'sealing' in Paul to water-rites, Nocent's key to connecting 'sealing' in Paul to baptism lies in the whole process of rites of immersion and the gift of the Spirit which constituted initiation in the early Church.

Dodd⁵² was chosen as an authority of his time on the gospel attributed to John. Cited by Daniélou, Dodd's work explores the background to Daniélou's interpretation of the Johannine understanding of X as a symbol of Christ rather than YHWH.

Filho⁵³ proposes theories of 'sealing' which connect eschatological concepts and uses, highlighting John's use of texts and events from Ezekiel, to explain the experience of the Christian community of his time and warning of impending judgement. His work agrees with Beale's⁵⁴ detailed analysis of the function of the seal in Revelation 7 as an image of salvation

⁵¹ Nocent, Adrien, O.S.B. 'Christian Initiation during the First Four Centuries.' Anscar J. Chupungco, O.S.B. (ed.) *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, Volume IV: *Sacraments and Sacramentals*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000 p.5 - 25.

⁵² Dodd, C.H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* Cambridge University Press 1953.

⁵³ Filho, J.A. 'The Apocalypse of John as an Account of a Visionary Experience: Notes on the Book's Structure' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 25.2, (2002) p. 213 – 234.

⁵⁴ Beale, G.K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1999.

and the 144,000 as a metaphor for the entire redeemed Christian community. Filho contrasts to Lampe and Woodcock's more literal interpretations of σφραγίς as a mark of God's protection, and develops further the figurative and eschatological 'seal' of the book of Revelation. Filho, like Martos, benefits from more recent thinking about the purpose and authorship of New Testament books such as Revelation, the gospel of John and the Pauline corpus.

Yon-Gyong Kwon⁵⁵ challenges traditional view of Lampe and his successors that ἀρραβών means a down-payment or first installment on salvation. Kwon claims that identification of ἀρραβών as 'deposit' in this way is a scholarly omission and argues that ἀρραβών means 'pledge' not 'down-payment' or 'deposit'. However Kwon's claim is weakened because he presupposes that down-payment is only synonymous with deposit. Whilst we equate ἀρραβών with down-payment, we do not agree with Kwon that this is in the commercial sense of a percentage of the whole.⁵⁶ Kwon's usefulness is his close identification of ἀρραβών with σφραγίς, and his argument that pledge and seal perform the same function as images of the Spirit at baptism. However, by stating that ἀρραβών refers to the Spirit as God's own pledge on Paul's apostleship. Kwon emphasizes the connection between ἀρραβών, σφραγίς and authentication, but potentially undermines the importance of the connection between ἀρραβών, σφραγίς and a pledge on future salvation indicated in the sacraments. Woodcock also suggests that Paul's use of ἀρραβών is unencumbered by repayments associated with a 'deposit' and that it refers to God's assurance of his promise of salvation. By using the phrase 'ἀρραβών of the 'indwelling of the Spirit' Woodcock,⁵⁷ unlike Kwon, maintains the different layers of meaning attached to ἀρραβών as a down-payment on salvation.

⁵⁵ Kwon, Y-G. 'Ἀρραβών as Pledge in Second Corinthians' *New Testament Studies* 54(2008) p.525-541.

⁵⁶ Lampe defines ἀρραβών as 'earnest money in business contracts' and 'pledge, foretaste of Christ', 'gift of the Holy Ghost' (Lampe, G.H.W. (ed.) *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961 – 1968 p.229). Lampe's theological application of ἀρραβών to Pauline works uses the second and third meanings.

⁵⁷ Woodcock, 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit' p. 153-154.

Sealing in the Fathers

Lampe acknowledges that the patristic evidence of 'sealing' is too inconclusive to provide the foundation for a doctrine of 'sealing' in relation to baptism and confirmation. He is clear that 'sealing' is baptism and states that the doctrine of 'sealing with the Spirit' merged 'by implication'⁵⁸ with the doctrine of confirmation. Lampe maintains that 'sealing' was not used to describe subsidiary rites of anointing and hand-laying in the Fathers, but states that the believer is sealed into the New Covenant of Christ by baptism and becomes an heir to his eschatological promise. In confirmation the believer enters into the fullness of the seal conferred at baptism. Whilst Lampe's work is conclusive, there is potential to explore further what he says and relate it to confirmation catechesis and the gift of the Spirit. We do not dispute Lampe, but examine critically the meaning of σφραγίς, σφραγίζω, χαρακτήρ and ἀρραβὼν to reveal more of what the baptismal seal of the New Testament and Fathers owes to its Old Testament and pagan roots and how this informs contemporary confirmation catechesis.

Daniélou examines the extent to which σφραγίς and σφραγίζω can be identified with baptism with reference to early liturgy and the Fathers. He exemplifies how early Christian history and theology of 'sealing' is grounded in Jewish ritual roots.

Yarnold⁵⁹ offers an interpretation of fourth century baptismal homilies which has been drawn on by more recent scholars. Yarnold's introduction to the baptismal homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, St. Ambrose and St Cyril of Jerusalem draws attention to the process of Christian initiation and mystagogy of the time with comparisons to the practices of Greek mystery religions and a detailed focus on baptismal rites.

⁵⁸ Lampe *The Seal of the Spirit* p.301.

⁵⁹ Yarnold, E., S.J., *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation: Baptismal Homilies of the Fourth Century* Slough: St. Paul Publications 1972.

Juliette Day⁶⁰ has built on the work of many scholars, including Neunheuser, Yarnold and Lampe, to question the different regional influences and dating of some of the most significant early baptismal liturgies. Day challenges some earlier scholarly writings by her conclusion that *Catechetical Lectures* and *Mystagogical Catecheses*, traditionally attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, show different rites of initiation, from different sources, dates and authors. She concludes that the *Mystagogical Catecheses* was probably written by John of Jerusalem during the early fifth century and suggests that the rites of sealing contained therein are the product of a different source than those described in the *Catechetical Lectures*. Day suggests that sealing described by Cyril refers to the 'whole rite'⁶¹ of baptism, to protection from evil and as a mark of belonging and conformity to Christ. She states that sealing in the *Catechetical Lectures* does not refer to anointing but that a close comparison can be made to the Syrian rites where it does. Day's structural analysis highlights that early baptismal liturgies can only be fully understood in the context of their relation with each other within their own regions and in comparison across Jerusalem, Palestine, West Syria and Egypt. Day follows the example of Verghese⁶² who highlights the importance of looking behind the Byzantine rites to the Jerusalemite, Antiochan and Alexandrian liturgical traditions that precede it. Vergese examines the relation between the three sacraments of initiation in the West Syrian tradition and draws attention to the language difficulties encountered when comparing the traditions of East and West. Terms which concern us in this study: 'sacrament', 'confirmation' and 'sacramental character' are used by Verghese as an example of Western terminology which would be difficult for the Eastern Church to comprehend linguistically and conceptually. He states that a

⁶⁰ Day, J. *The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem: Fourth and Fifth Century Evidence from Palestine, Syria and Egypt* Aldershot: Ashgate 2007.

⁶¹ Day, *Baptismal Liturgy* p.66.

⁶² Verghese, P. 'Relation between Baptism, 'Confirmation' and the Eucharist in the Syrian Orthodox Church' *Studia Liturgica* 4 (1965) p.82-93.

sacrament as a 'seal of attestation of some specific grace'⁶³ is a Western concept whereas the Eastern Church understands the language of mystery such as '*mysterion*'. He emphasizes that the Eastern Church includes chrismation with baptism as, together with the Eucharist, they 'constitute on single mystery'.⁶⁴ Day's analysis of baptismal rites by narrative, structure and the way in which different 'structural units' or rites are performed emphasizes shared influences between East and West where Verghese highlights differences.

Botte⁶⁵ provides a detailed analysis of his view of the sources and structure of the Apostolic Tradition as well as the 'person' of Hippolytus. His French translation of the Latin text of the *Apostolic Tradition* provides a ready comparison of the language of sealing, and is used by Whitaker,⁶⁶ Jungmann⁶⁷ and Finn.⁶⁸ Finn also discusses the development of a Christian community in Rome from social and legal marginalisation to a position of growth and development. Finn argues that the survival of the Christian community in Rome during the third century depended on the development of the catechumenate as it is detailed in the *Apostolic Tradition*, and its role as 'an effective rite of passage'.⁶⁹ Serra⁷⁰ suggests that the *Apostolic Tradition* is the source of the modern Roman Rite.

However, arguably, the *Apostolic Tradition* was neither the work of a single author nor written exclusively during the third century. A highly significant work on the *Apostolic Tradition* challenges traditional views. Whereas Lampe and Botte attribute apparent anomalies in the

⁶³ Verghese, 'Baptism, 'Confirmation' and the Eucharist' p.82.

⁶⁴ Verghese, 'Baptism, 'Confirmation' and the Eucharist' p.87.

⁶⁵ Botte, Bernard, O.S.B., *La Tradition Apostolique de St. Hippolyte: essai de reconstitution* Aschendorf: Münster Westfalen 1963.

⁶⁶ Whitaker E.C. (ed.), *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy* London: S.P.C.K. 1970.

⁶⁷ Jungmann Josef, S.J., *The Early Liturgy to the time of Gregory the Great* London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1959.

⁶⁸ Finn, Thomas M. 'Ritual Process and the Survival of Early Christianity: A Study of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus' *Journal of Ritual Studies* 3 no. 1 (Winter 1989) p.69-89.

⁶⁹ Finn, 'Ritual Process and the Survival' p.69.

⁷⁰ Serra, Dominic E. 'Syrian Pre-baptismal Anointing and Western Post-baptismal Chrismation' *Worship* 79 (2005) p. 328-341.

Apostolic Tradition to reliance on the Latin translation where the Greek original is missing, Baldovin⁷¹ sets out to prove that the *Apostolic Tradition* is neither the work of a single writer, nor was written during the third century. Baldovin concludes that the initiation rites in the *Apostolic Tradition* consist of 'liturgical material reworked as "living literature" in the fourth century'⁷² and that the rites of baptismal anointing described in it may not have existed during the third century.

Winkler⁷³ challenges the appropriateness of the use of the term 'seal' by Whitaker⁷⁴ as a translation of original Syriac documents. Winkler focuses on the Syriac, Greek and Armenian language of oil, anointing and 'sealing'. She claims that the Syriac term 'hatmā' translates as 'seal' and was used only to describe post-baptismal anointing. The term 'rušmā' which translates as 'sign' or 'mark', was commonly used for pre-baptismal anointing. Winkler claims that considerable misunderstanding about the purposes of baptismal anointing has resulted from the translation of 'rušmā' as 'seal'.⁷⁵ She argues that rites involving anointing and not the immersion in water 'from the central part of baptism'⁷⁶ in early Syriac rites because at that time the typology of Christ's baptism was used as a model for Christian baptism. When this was replaced by the post-resurrection typology of Romans 6, pre-baptismal rites became more concerned with exorcism and the delaying of the gift of the Holy Spirit to after the candidate was completely purified by rites of exorcism and immersion.

⁷¹ Baldovin J.F., S.J., 'Hippolytus and the Apostolic Tradition: Recent Research and Commentary' *Theological Studies* 64, (2003) p.520-542.

⁷² Baldovin 'Hippolytus and the Apostolic Tradition' p.535.

⁷³ Winkler, Gabriele, 'The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and its Implications' *Worship* 52.01 (1978) p.24-45 (reproduced in *Studies in Early Christian Liturgy and its Context* Variorum Collected Studies Series, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd 1997).

⁷⁴ Whitaker, *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*.

⁷⁵ Winkler 'Original Meaning' p.27.

⁷⁶ Winkler 'Original Meaning' p.37.

Building on both Lampe and Winkler, a dispute between Logan⁷⁷ and Mueller⁷⁸ sheds light on modern thinking about the meaning of baptismal anointing from the second to fourth centuries. Logan states that it is widely accepted that post-baptismal anointing did not exist before the late fourth century. He cites Lampe as being courageous in his argument against early rites of post-baptismal anointing and Brock who asserted there was no post-baptismal anointing in the early rites of Antioch. Logan claims that evidence of post-baptismal anointing in Antioch, as early as the second century, lies in the existence of a prayer for perfume in a Coptic version of the *Didache*. He discusses Winkler's claim that pre-baptismal anointing was essential to baptism as a symbol of Jesus' anointing at his baptism, and that this became replaced by whole body anointing with the gift of the Spirit becoming attached to baptism in water or post-baptismal anointing. Logan draws on Ysebaert to argue that these rites were either pre-baptismal rites in Syria which became post-baptismal rites in the West, or they were discontinued and then were revived in the fourth century. He maintains that the 'seal' in these early rites of post-baptismal anointing is attached to the same sort of covenant as that between God and kings and priests in the Old Testament and symbolizes sharing in Christ's baptism. However it is not always clear whether the seal refers to anointing before or after baptism in the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

Mueller dismisses Logan's claim on lack of evidence and argues that there is insufficient evidence to refute Winkler's claim that Syrian rites of initiation only contained pre-baptismal anointing before the fourth century. Mueller highlights the difficulties of proving Logan's claims based on evidence from the Coptic *Didache* and Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians. Mueller claims that the post-baptismal anointing in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, σφραγίς των

⁷⁷ Logan, A. 'Post-baptismal Chrismation in Syria: the evidence of Ignatius, the *Didache* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*' *Journal of Theological Studies* NS49 (1998) p.92 -108.

⁷⁸ Mueller, J.G., S.J., 'Post-baptismal Chrismation in Second Century Syria: A reconsideration of the evidence' *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 57, (2006) p.76-93.

συνθηκῶν, is evidenced in other parts of the *Apostolic Constitutions* as being the conclusion of the series of baptismal rites which seals the commitments that have been made. Logan's argument that the post-baptismal rite of anointing with μύρον existed in Syria before the late fourth century suggests that anointing rites from Syria and Antioch would have been more likely to have influenced the west rather than to have been influenced by the Church in Jerusalem. Mueller's findings seem to suggest a rekindling of more literal meanings of sealing for closure which might be applied to early liturgies in which baptism comprised a series of different rites. Furthermore, Mueller's investigation of the meaning of 'the seal of the contracts' arguably connects 'contracts' to 'covenant' if the wider meanings of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω are considered within the phrase σφραγίς τῶν συνθηκῶν. This potentially sheds light on the connections between circumcision and anointing in building up a complete meaning of the sacramental 'seal of the Spirit'.

Carr⁷⁹ draws attention to the many purposes for blessed oil in the manuals attributed to Sarapion of Thmuis in Egypt with healing and strengthening being the outcomes of baptismal anointing. Spinks⁸⁰ cautions against certainty over Sarapion's text showing pre-baptismal anointing for exorcism and post-baptismal anointing as chrismation. He claims that rather than being written around 350, it was probably the product of a 'Pseudo-Sarapion' during the fifth century with Arian or Pneumatomachian misconceptions. He criticizes Johnson's view that only pre-baptismal anointing took place in early Egyptian rites and cautions against applying Winkler's findings for the Syrian tradition to Egypt. He draws attention to the variety of practice outside Egypt and refers to the Acts of Thomas to exemplify pre-baptismal anointing

⁷⁹ Carr, Ephrem, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Consecration of Oils in the East' *Ecclesia Orans* 25 (2008) p.177-192.

⁸⁰ Spinks, Bryan D. 'Sarapion of Thmuis and Baptismal Practice in Early Christian Egypt: The Need for a Judicious Reassessment' *Worship* 72 (1998) p.255 – 270.

for healing, exorcism and protection. Johnson⁸¹ criticizes Spinks for trying to destabilize the accepted position of proven liturgical scholars such as Winkler. He defends his view that regardless of whether Sarapion wrote the materials attributed to him, they comprise an essential fourth century Egyptian source of 'paramount importance' in the development of early Christian liturgy.⁸²

Contemporary Challenges

A key source for current thinking on catechesis in the modern world is a symposium edited by John Redford.⁸³ It brings together the recent work of many contributors who are involved in theology and catechesis as researchers and providers of higher education and is therefore a leading source for examining the effect of the Church's recent documents concerning catechesis. A useful contemporary source, provided by Willey, de Cointet and Morgan, outlines good practice in catechesis, links content and pedagogy within the framework of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,⁸⁴ and enables catechists to identify their provision of learning and teaching within a living faith. This source is built on by Petroc Willey and drawn on by Bishop Richard J. Malone in recent publication⁸⁵ which results from an international catechetical conference (Rome 2009). It provides some valuable insights into recent developments in the Church's thinking on the catechetical pedagogy and catechist formation. These sources are central to examining how the Church addresses challenges to catechesis in the context of 'New Evangelisation'.⁸⁶ The United States Catholic Conference

⁸¹ Johnson, Maxwell E. 'The Baptismal Rite and Anaphora in the Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis: An Assessment of a Recent "Judicious Reassessment"', *Worship* 73 (1999) 140-168.

⁸² Johnson 'Sarapion of Thmuis' p.168.

⁸³ Redford, John, *Hear, O Islands: Theology and Catechesis in the New Millennium*, Dublin: Veritas 2002.

⁸⁴ Willey, P, De Cointet, P. and Morgan, B *The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis* San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2008.

⁸⁵ Farey, Caroline, Linnig, Waltraud, and Paruch, Johannah FSGM (eds) *The Pedagogy of God: Its centrality in Catechesis and Catechist Formation*. Ohio: Emmaus Road, 2011.

⁸⁶ Pope John Paul II (Pope John Paul II. *Homily of the Holy Cross, Mogila, Poland, 1979*).

of Bishops *Ad Hoc* Committee's 'Ten Catechetical Deficiencies'⁸⁷ provides us with a recent identification of where catechesis fall short of, or omits, key pillars of the Christian faith. More recently, Caroline Farey argues that the Trinity is frequently missing from Catholic catechetical programmes and explores the reasons why catechists may fail to be 'Christocentric – Trinitarian'.⁸⁸ These texts together with the *General Directory of Catechesis* enable us to examine how effective catechesis may be challenged by weak resources.

A series of recent comments on confirmation provide impressions of practice from the providers' perspective. Gomez⁸⁹ focuses on practice and emotive pedagogy although his article does not consider the theological content of confirmation programmes. Brewer⁹⁰ reflects on the connectivity of the three sacraments of initiation and the meaning of '*Christus in vobis*'.⁹¹ Having adopted the phrase 'Christ is in you' as his motto as a bishop, Brewer states that the Holy Spirit in confirmation makes Christ truly present in the lives of the recipients. He argues that catechetical materials focus on what the confirmands 'will be able to do' and that they do not understand what 'Christ is in you' really means. He also considers diversity in practice over the age of confirmation and McNally⁹² considers the value of addressing this diversity and restoring the 'identity' of the sacrament. Fossion⁹³ suggests a revised system of on-going catechesis for children and young people up to the age of thirty. The strength of Fossion's argument lies in his suggestion of restoring the order of sacraments and establishing catechetical stages which are more appropriate to the lives of young people growing up in the

⁸⁷ United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1997, <http://usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/conformity-review/protocol-for-assessing-the-conformity-of-catechetical-materials.cfm>.

⁸⁸ Farey, Caroline, 'Loss and retrieval of the Holy Trinity in Catechesis' *The Sower* (October 2008).

⁸⁹ Gomez, S. 'How to run a successful parish confirmation programme' *Priests and People* (April 2004) p. 153-156.

⁹⁰ Brewer, J. 'Confirmation in the Spirit' *Priests and People* (April 1996) p. 133-137.

⁹¹ Christ is in you (Col. 1:27) in Brewer, J. 'Confirmation in the Spirit' p.137.

⁹² McNally, P. 'Sacrament with an identity crisis' *Priests and People* (June 1998) p. 228-231.

⁹³ Fossion, A. 'Les trente premières années: nouveaux rythmes en catéchèse' *Revue Lumen Vitae* vol LXIII no. 1 (2008) p.19-33.

modern Church, but a potential weakness is in the extent to which the theological content of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation could be undermined by the suggested revision. Similarly, Robert Coffy⁹⁴ discusses the problems of the 'actualité' of confirmation. By 'actualité' Coffy refers to the spiritual meaning of confirmation, and suggests that the completion of baptism, the gift of the Spirit to combat evil and signing in particular are unclear. He questions the meaning of the celebration of confirmation in today's Church.

The United States National Conference for Catechetical Leadership published a series of white papers⁹⁵ (2010) which indicate current thinking on adolescent catechesis. Fox⁹⁶ has recently developed a curriculum for high school faith formation, based on the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops Framework for Adolescent Catechesis, which aims to provide a single curriculum and guideline which can be accessed by all coordinators, catechists and helpers involved in adolescent catechesis. Fox emphasizes the need to explore 'andragogy', by which he means using the personal experience of elders to enable discipling in a way that pedagogy does not. With a focus on stewardship, he looks at the pastoral side of formation and comes up with a selection of new terms to summarize experiential catechesis. He coins the term 'Catymmyst' to sum up a list of pastoral and educational qualities of a catechist with the qualities of a mystic as a 'spiritual guide' who is willing to share personal experience. He states that successful discipleship depends on blending the gifts of the catechist and mystic⁹⁷ with youth ministry. Fox provides many lists of qualities but provides little in the way of practical approaches. However, he does emphasize the importance of the parish community as a 'place where youth are welcomed, celebrate, taught and nurtured'.

⁹⁴ Coffy, Robert. 'La Confirmation aujourd'hui' *La Maison-Dieu*, 142, (1980) p.7-40.

⁹⁵ Available on <http://www.nccl.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=41076&orgId=nccl>.

⁹⁶ Fox, Patrick B. 'Discipling Youth to Christ A Practical Reflection On Adolescent Catechesis' NCCL White Paper <http://data.memberclicks.com/site/nccl/Patrick%20Fox.pdf> (2010).

⁹⁷ Fox uses the term 'mystic' to describe someone who tells their spiritual story rather than to indicate a specific spiritual practice.

Carotta⁹⁸ explores ways of making confirmation ‘a more formative experience’ in young people’s lives. He suggests that a ‘narrow’ focus on the ‘fruits of the Spirit, some Catholic basics, the grace inherent in the sacrament and service projects’ needs to be expanded into something more inspiring. Carotta argues for giving ‘deep and varied’ religious experience as part of confirmation preparation and encouraging young people to be more aware of the Spirit in their lives. He suggests tapping into the call of the disciples and spiritual practice to support the journey of discipleship. It means moving away from the practice of meeting young people ‘where they are at’ and providing a preparation process which will lead them into consideration of the ‘mind of others, the mind of Christ and the mind of the Church’. Carotta recommends a mentoring environment and a clear framework of doctrinal elements that need to be covered within confirmation catechesis and encourages a positive response with small steps to bring about a significant change.

⁹⁸ Carotta, Mike ‘Unchaining Confirmation’ NCCL White Paper, <http://data.memberclicks.com/site/nccl/Mke%20Carotta.pdf> (2010).

CHAPTER 1

CONFIRMATION CATECHESIS: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

The Introduction highlights that we need to examine why the imagery of 'sealing' has returned to the current Rite of Confirmation¹ and it brings us into contact with the relation between 'sealing' and catechetical themes for confirmation. In this chapter the significance of research into the 'seal' will be argued by establishing what the contemporary Church identifies as 'catechetical challenges', and how she responds to them in the light of 'New Evangelization'.² Through the new evangelization the Church is calling for culture change by inviting greater participation of all her people. This outreach affects all the faithful and impacts directly on those involved in catechesis and formation. Pope John Paul II highlights the 'absolute necessity' of an age-appropriate 'systematic approach to catechesis' as part of doctrinal formation.³ Pope Benedict XVI calls for a 'renewed zeal for evangelization and education in the faith'⁴. This thesis addresses this need with reference to baptism and confirmation with the purpose of identifying and presenting the 'seal of the Spirit' as a catechetical resource for confirmation preparation. The necessity of rigorous published materials and the strong formation of catechists are central to our investigation. For this we must also be aware of the need for adult formation as parents are their children's first catechists. We have argued in the Introduction that changing the bishop's words in the current Rite of Confirmation represents

¹ Chapter 5 investigates 'sealing' in early post-baptismal rites. 'Sealing' as an explicit term gradually disappeared in Western rites as confirmation emerged as a separate sacrament, but was retained in the Byzantine Rite.

² The term 'New Evangelization' was introduced by Pope John Paul II and used to foster a reawakening of a sense of apostolic mission within the Church. (Pope John Paul II, *Homily of the Holy Cross, Mogila, Poland*, (1979)1; *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English ASS 71 (1979) 865 cited in The Synod of Bishops (XIII Ordinary General Assembly) *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, (Lineamenta), Vatican City 2011, no.5. New Evangelization centres on finding new 'approaches' to evangelization and renewal in a changing world (*ibid.* 9- 10).

³ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* London: Catholic Truth Society 1989, 60.

⁴ Benedict XVI, 'Motu Proprio', *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London: Catholic Truth Society 2006.

an attempt to rekindle the imagery of ‘sealing’. This chapter connects the re-discovery of the ‘seal of the Spirit’ to the broader picture of re-evangelization where arguably it represents the Church’s rediscovery of its dogmatic and liturgical heritage for a richer sacramental catechesis. A small ‘opportunity sample’ of qualitative, semi-structured interview data from diocesan co-ordinators of confirmation, confirmation catechists and recently confirmed young people⁵ illustrates the findings from the Church’s statements with some examples of what is happening at diocesan and parish level.

We are now able to discuss more fully the aims of the research into the ‘seal’ and to establish a context for this study with reference to what the Church says about catechesis and formation and the role of parents therein.

Aims

The overall purpose of this thesis is to examine the ‘seal of the Spirit’ and illuminate its potential as a catechetical resource for confirmation preparation. The aims below show the structure of how this purpose is achieved.

The first aim, **to explore the contemporary challenges to confirmation catechesis**, contributes to the investigation of the ‘seal’ by identifying the social and ecclesial context in which catechesis takes place. It is addressed by theological reflection on Catholic catechesis and formation, drawing on the Church’s own statements, existing research literature and the indications of a small opportunity sample. It sets a context from which to launch the research contained in chapters 2 to 6. ‘Challenges’ for the purpose of this research means barriers to effective catechesis and difficulties identified within the Church in overcoming them. This chapter identifies a need for further research and sets a context for it by acknowledging that all

⁵ See Appendix One. This is not referred to as a survey as it is qualitative (Seale, C. (ed.) *Researching Society and Culture*, 3rd Ed., London, Sage: 2012). It is a small sample chosen by opportunity rather than a probability sampling method and claims only to be indicative of some peoples’ experience in some dioceses. A full survey would be required for representative statistical data.

is not well in the postmodern world of evangelization, catechesis and Catholic formation and outlining why.

The second aim, **to establish how far the catechetical content of confirmation preparation programmes provides for candidates to understand what it means to ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’** is clearly important for the thesis because it builds on findings in Chapter 1 by identifying more closely the content of confirmation catechesis. In Chapter 2 a survey of materials for confirmation preparation published between 1990 and 2009 demonstrates an, at least, widespread failure to present confirmands with a rich catechesis on ‘the seal of the Spirit’. The scene is set for this survey by the examination of a selection of catechetical materials from the 1920’s to the 1960’s to elicit what was conveyed about the ‘seal of the Spirit’ in confirmation catechesis prior to the Second Vatican Council. The resources for confirmation preparation will be measured against contemporary ‘major’ catechisms⁶ to indicate the extent to which catechetical material really conveys what the Church wants it to about the meaning and effects of confirmation.

The third aim, **to investigate the scriptural and traditional meanings alluded to, and the catechetical usefulness of, the bishop’s words in the liturgy for confirmation: ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’** forms the core of the research (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). It reveals a wealth of material which could be drawn upon by catechists or in revised confirmation preparation programmes so as to convey the Church’s teaching more effectively. Suggestions for how this might be achieved will be found in Chapter 6.

⁶ *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*; Smith, G. (ed.) *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed., London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1952); *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. For the terminology of ‘major’ and ‘minor’ catechisms see Marthaler, B.L., *The Catechism Yesterday and Today: The Evolution of a Genre*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995.

The fourth aim is **to draw conclusions based on the investigation into the theological meaning and catechetical potential of the ‘seal of the Spirit’ in confirmation.** Chapter 6 provides us with a short theology of sealing based on the findings of the previous chapters and concludes the investigation into its usefulness as a catechetical tool.

The fifth aim, **to apply findings to confirmation catechesis that will enable the newly confirmed young people to apply a clear understanding of what it means to be ‘sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’ to their post-confirmation sense of Catholic identity,** provides some applications of the findings to confirmation catechesis as an example of how the meaning of ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’⁷ might be brought alive for candidates for confirmation and accessed more effectively by those who have been recently confirmed.

Sources

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, (subsequently *Catechism*), *The General Directory of Catechesis* (subsequently GDC) and selected key sources from the contemporary Magisterium⁸ provide us with a foundation of Church teaching on evangelization, catechesis and formation within the ‘universal’, ‘particular’⁹ and ‘domestic’¹⁰ Church. By eliciting the Church’s own statements on Catholic formation and discussing them in the light of contemporary research and scholarship we shall be able to examine current challenges to catechesis, and how these challenges are met by the universal Church. By investigating what the Church sees as the role of parents within the process of catechesis and formation we shall

⁷ ‘The Rite of Confirmation.’ *The Rites of the Catholic Church as Revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*. New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1976, p. 301.

⁸ ‘Contemporary’ refers to documents written since the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) that are significant to this thesis. Some major sources such as the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971) are not cited because their teaching has largely become subsumed into other documents.

⁹ These terms refer to the Catholic Church across the world and the local (parish) Church respectively. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, London: Catholic Truth Society 1981.

¹⁰ Family Church ‘Lumen Gentium 11’ in Flannery A. (ed.) *Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, Dublin: Dominican Publications 1981, FC70.

be able to establish how far confirmation catechesis contributes to, and is supported by, the domestic Church. In addition to data specifically focussed on Catholic evangelization, catechesis and formation, some recent adjacent surveys have been considered which draw on the wider field of religious education and young peoples' participation in worship.¹¹ These surveys indicate how social scientific techniques can be employed to generate both quantitative and qualitative data around the topics of religious identity and practice amongst young people which helps to build up a picture of the needs of young Catholics. 'Religious Education' in the educational and social scientific sense refers to learning in schools and sixth form colleges. In British non-Catholic schools it refers to both 'learning about religion' and 'learning from religion'¹² and prepares children and young people to live in a pluralistic society. In Catholic, as in non-Catholic, schools it remains distinct from evangelization, catechesis and formation. This thesis respects that distinction and therefore does not make use of statistical data about religious education to inform research into challenges to catechesis.¹³ This is not to deny the educative role of catechesis, but for the purpose of this research a distinction must be maintained between 'religious education' and 'catechesis' to keep hold of the essential place of catechesis along the continuum of evangelization and formation in faith.

¹¹ The term 'worship' is used here to denote practice of world faiths including Christianity but not exclusive to it.

¹² Department for Education and Skills, *The non-statutory framework for Religious Education*, London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004, p.11.

¹³ Thomas Groome expands on the distinction between 'religious education' and 'catechesis' from the Catholic perspective in Groome, T. *Christian Religious Education*, New York: Harper and Row 1980. Westerhoff draws our attention to the necessity of impartiality in religious education, whilst catechesis focuses on 'induction' in Felderhoff, M.C. (ed), *Religious Education in a Pluralistic Society*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985, p.58 – 59.

Selected statements on Catholic formation from the universal magisterium

<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>	1975
<i>Catechesi Tradendae</i>	1977
<i>Familiaris Consortio</i>	1981
<i>Christefidelis Laici</i>	1989
<i>The Catechism of the Catholic Church and Fidei Depositum</i>	1992, revised 1997
<i>The Directory for Catechesis</i>	1997
<i>Ubicumque et Semper</i>	2010
<i>The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith (Lineamenta)</i>	2011

*Table 1: Key Sources for the Church's recent statements on Catholic Formation*¹⁴

A context for our research into the 'seal of the Spirit' relies on what the Church says about evangelization, catechesis and formation. We need to be aware of the last forty years of official documentation which encourages and informs the whole process of evangelization. The key documents cited above are essential to understanding the Church's teaching on formation; they are nonetheless alluded to for that purpose only, as a full analysis of their contents is substantial enough for a separate research project.

Let us think first of formation as a life-long process of coming to accept God's unconditional love graciously, and respond in love to God and to one another. Evangelization, catechesis and formation are all part of the same Christ-centred, ecclesial mission. *Catechesi Tradendae* reminds us that catechesis is a 'moment... in the whole process of evangelization'.¹⁵

¹⁴ See *The General Directory of Catechesis* London: Catholic Truth Society 1997, 1-8.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1979, 18.

‘Evangelization’ refers to the initial proclamation of the word of God and acceptance of it. It summarises the Church’s mission and is more broadly understood as bringing the gospel to all humanity to transform it.¹⁶

‘Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.’¹⁷

‘Catechesis’ is handing on the faith through learning and teaching. Willey describes catechesis as ‘the communication of God’s revelation’¹⁸. The GDC states that ‘catechesis’ is a ‘fundamental element of Christian initiation and is closely connected with sacraments of initiation’.¹⁹ Catechesis is ‘education in the faith’²⁰ which by definition is Christocentric,²¹ its aim being communion with Christ.²² Catechesis follows primary proclamation, and is a distinct element of formation, inseparable from it.

‘Formation’ refers to on-going growth in Christ,²³ through the work of the Church.²⁴ A ‘total integrated formation’²⁵ covers all aspects of Christian living. The GDC, for example, describes ‘formation’ as the preparation of catechists to teach in the name of Christ and the Church.²⁶ Also Dulles tells us that ‘formation in worship’ is a dimension of catechesis.²⁷ For the purpose of this chapter ‘formation’ is used to encompass all that evangelization, catechesis and formation describe as the process of maturation in a faith already acquired and ‘catechesis’ is

¹⁶ See Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1975, 14, 17 and 18; GDC 46.

¹⁷ EN 14.

¹⁸ Willey, P. in Farey, C., Linnig, W. and Paruch, J. (eds.) *The pedagogy of God: Its centrality in catechesis and catechist formation*, Ohio: Emmaus Road, 2011, p.29 with reference to a ‘pedagogy of faith’ (CT 58).

¹⁹ GDC 66.

²⁰ GDC 148.

²¹ GDC 235.

²² GDC 80 cf. CT5; CCC425.

²³ CL 60.

²⁴ CL 61.

²⁵ CL60.

²⁶ GDC 236.

²⁷ Dulles, Cardinal Avery, S.J., ‘The Catechetical Process in the light of the General Directory of Catechesis’ in Redford, John (ed.), *Hear, O Islands: Theology and Catechesis in the New Millennium*, Dublin: Veritas 2002, p.29.

used more specifically to refer to planned learning and teaching of the faith which includes sacramental preparation.

The Role of Parents in Catholic Formation

Since before the Second Vatican Council, the Church has taught that parents are the 'principal' educators of their children²⁸ and that the family is the special place for the 'formation of offspring.'²⁹ Furthermore, because the family is instituted by God, its responsibility for formation is more important than that of wider society.³⁰ This priority of parents and clear statement of their responsibility to nurture their children in the faith underpins the Church's statements on the role of parents today: parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.³¹

To understand exactly what the Church means by parents as 'principal' and 'first' educators, Willey analyses the four meanings Aristotle attributes to 'primary'.³² He states that 'primary educators' refers to 'prior in time', linking education with procreation and describing parents' responsibility for their children's earliest learning. This responsibility remains as the children grow older, and responds to their changing needs. Moreover, Willey compares 'principal' to Aristotle's meaning of 'prior in being'. This meaning both expresses the connection between procreation and education, and the shift in the order of being as new parents respond to the 'essential' vocation to educate their children.³³ Regarding Aristotle's meaning for primary as 'prior in order', Willey cites *Divini illius magistri* which tells us that there are 'three necessary societies' – family, Church and state, of which family is the first, in order and precedence.³⁴

²⁸ *Gravissimum Educationis* 3; CCC1653.

²⁹ *Divini Illius Magistri* 12.

³⁰ DIM 12.

³¹ FC36.

³² Willey, P. 'Parents, primary educators of their children' in Redford (ed), *Hear O Islands*, p. 242- 254.

³³ Willey quotes FC 36, 'Parents, primary educators', p. 245.

³⁴ DIM 11.

Willey explains that Catholic education is also 'primary' in Aristotle's fourth sense of 'prior in importance'. Arguably, for the purpose of understanding the contemporary role of parents in formation, this is the most important meaning which is the culmination of the sense of the other three. By virtue of the loving relationship between parents and children, education from the family surpasses that of other 'societies'.

For it devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered amongst children.³⁵

In conclusion John Paul II³⁶ tells us that the educational role of parents is part of humanity's vocation to become a self-gift in love, to one another through marriage³⁷ and to one's children. In the light of this Willey argues that support for parents in educating their children should be central to the Church's 'catechetical efforts' and highlights this as a key area for further research and resources.³⁸ The Church recognizes the evangelizing role of the domestic Church and its need to be evangelized,³⁹ so it calls for parents and Christian communities to work together, and for Catholic schools to participate with families and parishes in forming a pastoral, 'educating' community.⁴⁰

More recently, *Lineamenta* for the XIIIth Ordinary General Assembly reinforces that the family is the principal place for teaching children how to pray and for 'sustaining and nourishing' the faith.⁴¹ Through shared family prayer parents model and explain the Christian faith to their children, enabling them to grow in understanding and love of God.

³⁵ FC 36 cf. GE 3: 'the duty of parents to create an atmosphere inspired by of love'.

³⁶ FC 36.

³⁷ The love between God and people is expressed through marriage. CF 12.

³⁸ Willey, 'Parents, primary educators' p. 249-250.

³⁹ FC 51.

⁴⁰ FC 40.

⁴¹ *Lineamenta*, 2011, 22.

The Christian family is called to take part actively and responsibly in the mission of the Church in a way that is original and specific by placing itself in what it is and what it does as an 'intimate community of life and love' at the service of the Church and of society.⁴²

It is therefore fully evidenced that the Church continues to tell us that the Christian family is at the heart of formation; the domestic Church is central to the mission of the universal Church and that the family is a community founded on and renewed by the love of Christ. This aspect of Church teaching affects the context for research into the 'seal' as a tool for confirmation catechesis by providing us with the Church's view of young peoples' Catholic formation by the time they start sacramental preparation and suggesting that as 'principal educators' parents should play an active role in their children's on-going formation. But how far is the message of the universal Church being fully received and embraced in the domestic and particular Church? Evidence discussed below demonstrates that the Church is fully aware of contemporary challenges to catechesis.

Catechetical Challenges and the Church's own statements

That the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church requires a vibrant and effective catechesis⁴³ is a conviction underpins our research into the 'seal'.

The Church has long acknowledged social imbalance,⁴⁴ increasing secularism and atheism as challenges to the whole process of evangelization.⁴⁵ Increasing 'religious indifference'⁴⁶ and 'abandonment of the faith'⁴⁷ affecting whole communities have been highlighted since by the Church to be real challenges to catechesis in our time. Pope John Paul II identified one of the challenges to catechesis as a lack of initial evangelization and called for a catechetical model

⁴² FC 50.

⁴³ Cf. CCC 1074 quotes CT 23.

⁴⁴ *Gaudium et Spes* 4, 6; FC 6.

⁴⁵ EN 54-56; CL 4.

⁴⁶ CL4.

⁴⁷ Benedict XVI, *Ubicumque et Semper*, http://www.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20100921_ubicumque-et-semper_en.html.

to allow for this.⁴⁸ He also emphasized the need for ‘authentic’ family catechesis in places where ‘widespread unbelief or invasive secularism’ prevents catechesis elsewhere.⁴⁹

Now Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that we are all affected by profound sociological, technological, cultural and economic change. Whilst there are global benefits, there are consequences for religious life which include a ‘troubling loss of the sacred’.⁵⁰ He explains that evangelization and Christian initiation should include education in the faith and terms the current challenges as an ‘educational emergency’.⁵¹ Pope Benedict XVI cites relativism⁵² replacing love of Christ, parents and teachers abdicating their responsibilities to hand on the faith to children and consumerism replacing Christian mission as reasons for difficulties in bringing children and young people into a lasting relationship with Christ.⁵³

Pope John Paul II stated that catechesis was in need of renewal through new initiatives, but warned of endangering ‘integrity of the content’.⁵⁴ Reluctance to bring catechesis into the modern world by clinging to outdated routines, ‘leading to stagnation, lethargy and eventual paralysis’ are clearly barriers to catechetical effectiveness.⁵⁵ The GDC emphasizes that catechesis seeks to lead people into a deeper relationship with Christ and a ‘balanced presentation’ of his humanity and divinity is essential.⁵⁶ However the GDC evidences that the Church is fully aware that catechesis is often ineffective. Further catechetical inadequacies identified by the GDC include lack of authenticity of fundamental Catholic doctrine, including

⁴⁸ CT 19.

⁴⁹ FC 52 quotes CT 68.

⁵⁰ *Ubicumque et Semper* p.1.

⁵¹ *Lineamenta*, 2011, 20 quotes Benedict XVI, *Discourse at the Opening of the Convention of the Diocese of Rome (11th June 2007)*, http://www.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/june/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070611_convegno-roma_en.html.

⁵² *Lineamenta*, 2011, 6 elaborates on relativism and associated social contexts as evidence of the need for new evangelization.

⁵³ *Convention of the Diocese of Rome*, 2007.

⁵⁴ CT 30.

⁵⁵ CT 17.

⁵⁶ GDC 30 cf. CT 29.

eschatology.⁵⁷ That GDC 30 cites *Catechesi Tradendae* 30 in mentioning selectivity in some areas of catechesis to the detriment of others (e.g. moral and social teaching) suggests that problems of inadequate catechetical provision are neither new nor easy to address. Moreover, the findings of the GDC have significant implication for the content and pedagogy of sacramental preparation:

-“Catechesis is intrinsically bound to every liturgical and sacramental action.” Frequently however the practice of catechesis testifies to a weak and fragmentary link with the liturgy: limited attention to liturgical symbols and rites, scant use of the liturgical fonts, catechetical courses with little or no connection with the liturgical year; the marginalization of liturgical celebrations in catechetical programs.⁵⁸

That the GDC highlights a ‘weak and fragmentary’ link between catechesis and liturgy, ‘limited attention’ to ‘symbols and rites’ and the sidelining of ‘liturgical celebration’ reveals a key challenge of confirmation catechesis and suggests that the ‘seal of the Spirit’ may well be overlooked.

John Redford draws attention to the centrality of scripture in catechesis⁵⁹ and investigates the GDC’s concern that scripture is not fully integrated with tradition and magisterium.⁶⁰ Redford’s discussion of the extent to which we can use scripture to underpin Christian doctrine is highly pertinent to the research into the ‘seal’ in the New Testament which forms a core element of this thesis.⁶¹ Redford points out the implication that the post-Vatican II Church has retained some unsettled questions regarding the use of scripture. He states that tensions over interpreting scripture and hermeneutics must be resolved before catechesis can be put right. Moreover, Redford argues that modern scriptural *exegesis* can often become *eisegesis*, as the

⁵⁷ Over-emphasis of the humanity of Christ without reference to his divinity and the lack of eschatology in published programmes for confirmation preparation is discussed in Chapter Two.

⁵⁸ GDC 30, quoting CT 23.

⁵⁹ Redford, (ed.), *Hear, O Islands*, p.209 cites GDC 71.

⁶⁰ Redford, (ed.), *Hear, O Islands*, p.209 cites GDC 30.

⁶¹ Chapter 4.

exegete is influenced by personal opinion of doctrine rather than a clear view of the Church's tradition and magisterium. Here we have evidence of a long-standing barrier to effective catechesis which suggests that the scriptural content of catechesis is distorted therefore preventing full understanding in the experience of catechists and candidates. Inevitably poorly formed catechists, who lack knowledge and understanding of the faith or the skill to teach it, present a significant challenge to catechesis.⁶² Avery Dulles emphasizes the importance of spiritual formation underpinning subject knowledge and reminds us that catechesis should not include the catechist's personal bias.⁶³

Currently, the *Lineamenta* recognize that many local Churches are challenged by a lack of priests, family pressures undermining parental involvement and fewer people sharing in the evangelizing role of the Christian community.⁶⁴ Whilst this affects the whole process of evangelization, it inevitably adds to the workload of catechists and is likely to have a negative effect on the quality of catechetical provision. More specifically for confirmation catechesis, the *Lineamenta* cite agreeing an age for confirmation and planning mystagogy into programmes for initiation as significant challenges.⁶⁵

The discussion above has shown that the Church recognizes two key areas of catechetical challenge: those resulting from a societal decline in religious values and those concerning the content of catechetical provision. Both these areas affect the formation of catechists and the catechetical experience of young people. The former applies to the whole process of evangelization and constitutes an 'educational emergency'⁶⁶ in itself. The latter requires a little more analysis as we have identified that the Church is aware of significant deficiencies in

⁶² GDC 30.

⁶³ Dulles, 'The Catechetical Process' Redford, (ed.), *Hear, O Islands*, p.29, cites GDC 78.

⁶⁴ *Lineamenta*, 2011, 15.

⁶⁵ *Lineamenta*, 2011, 18.

⁶⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Convention of the Diocese of Rome*, 2007.

catechetical provision, which potentially distort the transmission of core beliefs of the Catholic Church.⁶⁷

In 1997 the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops *Ad Hoc* Committee to oversee the use of the Catechism (subsequently *Ad Hoc* Committee) conducted a review of catechetical materials.⁶⁸ The 'protocol'⁶⁹ was used as the standard review instrument and the publishers' own assessment of the materials was also taken into account. The catechetical publications were assessed for authenticity and completeness of the Christian message and the extent to which the publications were in conformity with the *Catechism*. The *Ad Hoc* Committee identified ten catechetical deficiencies, sufficiently prevalent amongst the publications reviewed to suggest some significant recurring omissions in the transmission of the Church's core teaching in line with those outlined in the GDC.⁷⁰ Whilst the materials reviewed were all from the United States, the correlation to GDC 30 suggests that the same or similar deficiencies are likely to be widespread. Brian Pizzalato draws attention to the probability that today's catechists have received the same omissions in their own formation.⁷¹

⁶⁷ GDC 30.

⁶⁸ United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1997. <http://old.usccb.org/catechism/document/oralrpt.shtml>

⁶⁹ The current protocol for assessing conformity of catechetical materials was approved in September 1997 after a year's trial which included the review of catechetical materials discussed above.

<http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/conformity-review/> For the current USCCB conformity review is available see <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/conformity-review/>.

⁷⁰ GDC 30.

⁷¹ Pizzalato, Brian, 'Tolerance: Catechesis and Contemporary Culture', *The Sower*, (July–September 1980), p. 30-31.

The <i>Ad Hoc</i> Committee Review ⁷²	The <i>General Directory of Catechesis</i> ⁷³
Insufficient attention to the Trinity and Trinitarian structure of Catholic beliefs and practices	
Obscured presentation of the centrality of Christ in salvation history and insufficient emphasis on the divinity of Christ	It is necessary to arrive at a more balanced presentation of the entire truth of the mystery of Jesus Christ. Often, emphasis is given only to his humanity without any explicit reference to his divinity.
Indistinct treatment of the ecclesial context of Catholic beliefs and magisterial teachings	Tradition is less influential... reference to sacred scripture is virtually exclusive ...the inter-relation of scripture, tradition and the magisterium...does not harmoniously enrich a catechetical transmission of the faith.
Inadequate sense of a distinctively Christian anthropology	There are certain doctrinal <i>lacunae</i> concerning the truth about God and man.
Insufficient evidence on God's initiative in the world; corresponding overemphasis on human action	A proliferation of catechisms and texts, the products of particular initiatives whose selective tendencies and emphases are so differing as to damage the convergence necessary for the unity of the faith.
Insufficient recognition of the transforming effects of grace	There are certain doctrinal <i>lacunae</i> concerning the truth ...about grace
Inadequate presentation of the sacraments	Frequently...a weak and fragmentary link with the liturgy
Deficiency in the teaching on original sin and sin in general	There are certain doctrinal <i>lacunae</i> concerning the truth ... about sin
Meagre exposition of Christian moral life	There is a need for a more solid moral formation.
Inadequate presentation of eschatology	There are certain doctrinal <i>lacunae</i> concerning the truth ... about eschatology

Table 2: A comparison between *The Ten Catechetical Deficiencies* and GDC 30

Taken as a whole, the 'ten deficiencies' suggest that the core elements of the mystery of the Trinity, the Church, humanity, the divine economy, grace, the sacraments, sin, morals and eschatology are all being poorly transmitted in a sample of published catechetical programmes. The most obvious feature of the comparison above (*fig. 2*) is that the *Ad Hoc* Committee identifies lack of teaching on the Trinity as the first deficiency, whereas GDC 30 does not mention it. The protocol measures teaching on the Trinity against CCC 261 and

⁷² USCCB, 1997. <http://old.usccb.org/catechism/document/oralrpt.shtml> .

⁷³ GDC 30.

267,⁷⁴ hence their findings suggest that the Trinity is neither communicated as a central mystery of the Church, nor that it is revealed by God, nor that the divine persons are inseparable. Because the Trinity is a pillar of the Christian faith, it seems unlikely that the challenges to catechesis identified in GDC 30, or the earlier magisterium, would be so evident were the Trinity properly communicated.⁷⁵

The *Ad Hoc* Committee provides some research based evidence which verifies the Church's statements on challenges to catechesis and identifies a need for further research. The Church's call for catechetical renewal, along with her work towards new evangelization, has become increasingly more insistent since the 1970s. The following discussion looks at the action being taken by the Church to renew catechesis in the light of the gospel message.

The Church's action on catechetical challenges

The Church has been addressing challenges to catechesis since the Second Vatican Council through a series of publications(see *table 1* p.38). From calling for 'catechesis full of gospel vitality',⁷⁶ and including the publication of the GDC (1997) and revised edition of the *Catechism* (1997), the Church has addressed escalating challenge. Not least, full involvement of the lay faithful is outlined in *Christefidelis Laici* and attention drawn to the formation of catechists in GDC 324 – 247. Nonetheless, the fact remains that Pope Benedict XVI has identified an 'educational emergency' and it is to the Church's action over the last decade that we need to turn our attention.

⁷⁴ USCCB, 1997, <http://usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/conformity-review/protocol-for-assessing-the-conformity-of-catechetical-materials.cfm>.

⁷⁵ Caroline Farey argues that the Trinity is frequently omitted from Catholic catechetical resources or improperly, even heretically, taught because of poorly formed catechists, difficulties in communicating it, weak resources and active discouragement from influential scholars and publishers who think it is gender biased. She highlights the seriousness of eliminating Trinitarian teaching and reminds us that GDC 100 calls for all catechesis to be 'Christocentric – Trinitarian'. Farey, Caroline, 'Loss and retrieval of the Holy Trinity in Catechesis' *The Sower* (October 2008).

⁷⁶ EN 54.

Pope Benedict XVI draws attention to the need for discernment for evangelization to respond to different situations in the world.⁷⁷ He states that 'new evangelization' cannot be limited to a single formula as evangelization is based on the desire to partake in God's gift of himself. Consequently he established a 'Pontifical Council to Promoting the New Evangelization' to address key issues including reflection on the pastoral and theological meaning of the new evangelization. The council is to liaise with Bishops' Conferences on evangelization, to support initiatives in new evangelization, to examine the use of modern communications for evangelization and to promote the use of the *Catechism*.⁷⁸

Moreover, Pope Benedict XVI is dedicating the next Ordinary General Assembly in 2012 to 'The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith'.⁷⁹ In its preparatory programme, the *Lineamenta* draw on the GDC and call for a 'renewed emphasis' on catechesis and the catechumenate as the 'pedagogy of the faith'.⁸⁰ Recognizing that catechesis is the 'formation for Christian life',⁸¹ the *Lineamenta* describe the catechumenate as a reminder that initiation is the responsibility of the whole Christian community and proper formation is centred on the Paschal Mystery.⁸² The *Lineamenta* set out to raise baptized peoples' awareness of their missionary role in full consciousness that new evangelization requires 'effort, attentiveness, education and concern'.⁸³

Since the publication of 'ten catechetical deficiencies' in 1997, the *Ad Hoc* Committee has continued to review catechetical series for conformity to the *Catechism*. The review is

⁷⁷ US, 21st September 2010.

⁷⁸ US art. 3.

⁷⁹ *Lineamenta*, 2011, p. v.

⁸⁰ *Lineamenta*, 2011, 14 cf. CT 58.

⁸¹ *Lineamenta*, 2011, 14 quotes GDC 68.

⁸² *Lineamenta*, 2011, 14 cf. GDC 90, 91.

⁸³ *Lineamenta*, 2011, 22.

voluntary and a 'conformity listing' of reviewed materials is maintained.⁸⁴ That suggests a partial solution to omissions in some United States published materials. Although this does little to address global social and ecclesial challenges to catechesis, the USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis has since published the *Curriculum Framework* for catechetical programmes for young people of high school age.⁸⁵ These guidelines set out six themes⁸⁶ and comprise a list of subject areas and catechetical references. It is designed to provide a 'systematic' approach to support catechists and programme publishers. The *Curriculum Framework* draws on the GDC's 'Pedagogy of God'.⁸⁷ Used in conjunction with appropriate methodology and resources, it addresses the 'ten deficiencies' and is suitable for use for catechesis and catechist formation.

On the Way to Life, commissioned by The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales⁸⁸ examines how Catholic religious education, catechesis and formation are influenced by contemporary culture. It is an interpretive study which offers some analysis of the ecclesial, secular and personal context of religious education, catechesis and formation. Its purpose is to inform a process, invite further interpretations and debate. The Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life (subsequently HIREPL) discusses the extent to which secularization, accountable for the decline of religion, and modernity, as a context for 'spirituality'⁸⁹ replacing 'religion', are adequate models for interpretation. The report draws on statistical data

⁸⁴ USCCB, 2011, <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/conformity-review/upload/Currentlist-12-28-2011.pdf>.

⁸⁵ USCCB, *Adaptation of Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age* 2010 <http://www.usccb.org/>; <http://old.usccb.org/catechism/document/oralrpt.shtml>.

⁸⁶ The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture; Who is Jesus Christ?; The Mission of Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ's Mission continues in the Church; Sacraments as privileged encounters with Jesus Christ and Life in Jesus Christ. It also includes additional Protocol items from the *Ad Hoc* Committee's protocol, 1997.

⁸⁷ GDC 137-147. For a full discussion of current thinking on the 'Pedagogy of God' in catechesis see Willey, P. 'An original pedagogy for catechesis' in Farey, C., et al. (eds.) *The pedagogy of God*, 2011, p15 – 28.

⁸⁸ The Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life, *On the Way to Life: Contemporary Cultural and Theological Development as a Framework for Catholic Education, Catechesis and Formation*, HIREPL, 2005.

⁸⁹ HIREPL acknowledges that the term 'spirituality' 'lacks definition'; it is used to denote the subjectivism of religion. HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.19.

and analyses current trends that characterize contemporary culture. It also acknowledges Catholicism as a 'culture' with doctrines, symbols and behaviour, and that transmission and formation are integral to the way Catholicism interprets and is interpreted by other cultures. It identifies some of the tensions affecting the transmission of Catholicism within the Church and post-modern society stating that religion is 'problematic'⁹⁰ for a secular culture. Drawing on evidence from *Our Faith Story*⁹¹ and *On the Threshold*⁹² HIREPL has found that the Church needs to develop language and an 'interpretive' vision to address social and human questions and combat the force of secularization. HIREPL interprets evangelization as a two-way process: the Church's mission and 'colonisation' of the Church by society. It states that the Church needs to strengthen its members 'in the power of Christian truth, its credibility and beauty'⁹³

On the Way to Life draws on statistical evidence from the European Values Study (subsequently EVS)⁹⁴ which identifies tensions in society by evidencing a diminution of Christian practice, despite a relatively strong (71.8%) belief in some form of higher being. It acknowledges that the research questions are 'frustratingly loose'⁹⁵ and difficult to interpret from a theological and catechetical perspective. The report also draws on Brierley⁹⁶ to identify a 42% decline in Catholic Church attendance between 1979 and 1998.

On the Way to Life does not offer a substantial theological analysis. It argues that education, catechesis and formation must rekindle their own theological rationale. However, the report's

⁹⁰ HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.7.

⁹¹ Purnell, P. *Our Faith Story*, cited in HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.33, was influential in the latter part of the last century for religious education in Great Britain.

⁹² *On the Threshold*, *ibid.* p. 33, is an example of a useful publication by CBCEW to support priests and catechists at the turn of the millennium.

⁹³ HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.7.

⁹⁴ EVS, 2000, HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.10, see also EVS.

<http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/evs/research/themes/religion/> This survey consists of a wide range of data which indicates attitudes to religion at the time, but the questions are too open-ended to inform generate specific evidence for catechesis in the Catholic Church.

⁹⁵ HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.11.

⁹⁶ Brierley, P. *The Tide is Running Out*, cf. YouGov Poll, 2004, cited in HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.11.

claim that the Church's programmes of religious education, catechesis and formation are 'considerable assets' characterized by 'vitality and professionalism'⁹⁷ seems to be at odds with the *Ten Deficiencies* and GDC 30. This suggests a lack of rigour in HIREPL's synopsis of catechetical content and is possibly indicative of a shifting trend away from the pillars of the Church's teaching in order to respond to changing societal challenges and cultural needs. The report over-emphasizes human action in reclaiming a vision of Catholicism, describing education, catechesis and formation as something 'the Church has to offer humanity' without any reference to communion with Christ or the Trinity.⁹⁸ HIREPL argues for 'Catholic modernity' as a solution because it incorporates contemporary values without compromising Catholic identity. 'Sacramental vision'⁹⁹ which makes this possible, is centred on Christ overcoming sin and the 'analogical relationship'¹⁰⁰ between God and man. The explanation that this is sourced 'within the Trinitarian life of the union and distinction of persons'¹⁰¹ has evidently been discarded by Farey¹⁰² as a reference to the Trinity; it leaves us uncertain as to how far 'sacramental vision' includes reference to a tri-personal God because the context of Trinity is neither clarified nor developed. The report details the importance of Christ as the *telos* of the human journey and freedom obtained through the cross, but lack of reference to the Trinity and God's initiative with over-emphasis on human action characterize 'sacramental vision' and the report's theological solutions to contemporary ecclesial and societal challenges.

So how far do the *Lineamenta* address the difficulties highlighted by HIREPL? This is highly significant to research into the usefulness of the 'seal of the Spirit' as a catechetical resource

⁹⁷ HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.57.

⁹⁸ HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.55. Caroline Farey has identified that the report only uses the term 'Trinity' once (when quoting Pope John Paul II) and 'God the Father' twice (both occasions when citing the name of a book).

⁹⁹ HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.63.

¹⁰⁰ HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.63 (cites Tracy D. *The Analogical Imagination, Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, New York: Crossroads 1981 p.410).

¹⁰¹ HIREPL *On the Way to Life* p.63.

¹⁰² Farey, 'Loss and retrieval'.

because it is the contemporary catechetical climate that we must assess if we are to evaluate how the 'seal of the Spirit' might address specific needs of catechists and candidates for confirmation. The *Lineamenta* draw on a familiar picture of new evangelization re-affirming social and cultural needs which have become well-established since the Second Vatican Council. However, they neglect to draw significant attention to the contribution to evangelization made by many new movements and youth outreach. For our purpose, World Youth Day is of particular importance because it offers evangelization to young people, in a climate where the primacy of family formation is diminishing.

In his message to young people for World Youth Day (subsequently WYD) 2008 Pope Benedict XVI drew attention to renewal by the Holy Spirit through a deepened appreciation of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. He stated that 'the truth' of these sacraments is 'perhaps neglected in the faith life of many Christians' and 'that many young people distance themselves from their life of faith after they have received Confirmation'. He urged young people to 'rediscover the sacrament of confirmation' and its spiritual significance.

¹⁰³ Here we have an example of new evangelization in action. Arguably, for this action to be followed through into the lives of young people and their 'rediscovery' of confirmation, it must be backed up by fully formed catechists and functional resources that can tackle identified catechetical deficiencies.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ 'Message of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to the young people of the world on the occasion of the xxiii world youth day', (2008) paragraph 6.
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20070720_youth_en.html.

¹⁰⁴ *Ten deficiencies* and GDC 30. Appendix One provides us with a snapshot of confirmation catechesis at diocesan level. The interview data indicated that some young people may not understand what it means to 'be sealed' at confirmation and highlighted a perception amongst adults involved in confirmation that there is a need for more relevant catechetical resources and catechist training.

Pilgrim's Progress 2008 (subsequently PP08)¹⁰⁵ provides some useful statistical data on the impact of WYD on young Catholics which enable us to look at how a 'rediscovery' of confirmation might be brought about. PP08 was a large-scale (n=2483, weighted), multi-method enquiry into the effects of WYD on the religious practice of young, English-speaking Catholics aged 15-35 (average age 21). This online survey identified factors of WYD that increased the frequency of mass attendance five months after the event. Frequency of prayer and mass attendance before and after WYD were measured and respondents were asked to rate WYD events as 'very helpful', 'fairly helpful' or 'not helpful'. Respondents were asked to place other aspects on rank order. That 62% rated 'Faith: being with others, sharing the same faith' highly with other highly ranked aspects being: Church: pride in being Catholic, being part of something greater than ourselves'; 'Holy Spirit: the sense that God was present' and 'Community: the special kind of friendliness and openness' is an indicator of the importance shared spiritual experience and a sense of religious identity to young people. Singleton concludes that WYD 'has the capacity to produce increases in religious practice'¹⁰⁶ especially amongst young people who are already partly formed. Almost all those who reported more frequent mass attendance had parental or peer religiosity in their background which highlights the importance of parents as primary educators and of community in faith development. Although PP08 does not measure permanent change, it does show that WYD's combination of social and religious experiences with catecheses and encouragement does strengthen existing faith in young Catholics. The message for all involved in support of a 'rediscovery' of confirmation is that evangelization begins at home and a climate of community, shared worship and purposeful catechesis does make a positive difference.

¹⁰⁵ Singleton, A. 'The Impact of World Youth Day on Religious Practice', *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2011) 57-68.

¹⁰⁶ Singleton 'The Impact of WYD' p.67.

The *Lineamenta* have omitted discussion of internal dissent in the Church. With the suggestion that young people are very often receiving catechesis before they are fully evangelized, and that resources are inadequate to address the issue, it is worthwhile to examine what current research can tell us about formation. The following summaries of adjacent¹⁰⁷ studies indicate how Catholic identity and religious maturity can be assessed.

Adjacent studies

The Catholic Youth Ministry Federation (subsequently CYMFed) was launched in 2009 as part of a national initiative to strengthen youth ministry in England and Wales. The CYMFed team commissioned research¹⁰⁸ to map young Catholics' views and sense of identity. The sample group was 1000 Catholics¹⁰⁹ aged from 11 – 25 with a broad social background and geographical spread across England and Wales and a gender balance. The survey identifies belief in God as a central factor in young peoples' sense of Catholicity, with significant diversity over what 'belief in God' constitutes. Only 25% of young Catholics identified 'an awareness of the Holy Spirit';¹¹⁰ although the statistics for how many have received the sacrament of confirmation are not available, the report shows that only 35% of self-identifying Catholics (22% of the whole group) believed in 'a personally involved God'¹¹¹. These statistics do evidence the view that many young Catholics are unevangelized. They add credence to the hypothesis that there is a lack of evangelization in the home and that young people enrolling on confirmation preparation programmes are likely to be unevangelized. Other findings are likely to correlate with the experience of young people from other faiths or

¹⁰⁷ These studies are deemed to be 'adjacent' because they do not pertain directly to our research into confirmation catechesis, but they do contribute towards building up a picture of the challenges to confirmation catechesis.

¹⁰⁸ Led by the research agency nfp Synergy (Duyvenbode, Matthew van, *Mapping the Terrain: Discovering the reality of young Catholics*, Catholic Youth Ministry Federation, summary report 2009).

¹⁰⁹ 62% described themselves as 'Catholic'. although 38% were reluctant to self-identify as Catholic, they came from Catholic families or attended Catholic schools.

¹¹⁰ van Duyvenbode, *Mapping the Terrain* p.4.

¹¹¹ van Duyvenbode, *Mapping the Terrain* p.2.

no faith, for example many young Catholics feel worried about school or work, their families and their place in wider society.¹¹²

The *Teenage Religion and Values Survey*¹¹³ (subsequently TRVS) of the 1990s draws on a large sample of 33, 982 young people aged between 13 and 15 and provides statistical information about religious affiliation and attitudes. This survey builds on previous work during the 1980s by Leslie Francis and has become the basis for a number of further studies.¹¹⁴ The TRVS uses questionnaires with dichotomous yes/no scale and five point Likhert (1932) scale questions. It was designed to test different dimensions of religion and test the interaction between them. As the TRVS sample is a multi-faith group, most of the findings are too broad to be directly relevant to our research into catechesis, but there are some key findings that corroborate with those of other research discussed in this chapter and provide some insights into young peoples' belief in God. For example the TRVS evidences that the number of young people believing in God diminishes as age increases during the teenage years. In a further paper,¹¹⁵ Francis and Robbins investigate differences amongst young people who do not believe in God and describe themselves as Anglicans. Although not Catholic studies, these might enable us to understand more about how far unevangelized Catholics are enrolling for confirmation catechesis and help us identify how their needs could be more accurately identified.

¹¹² van Duyvenbode, *Mapping the Terrain* p.3.

¹¹³ Robbins, M. and Francis, L.J. 'The Teenage Religion and Values Survey in England and Wales: an overview' *British Journal of Religious Education*, vol. 32, No. 3 (2010) 307 – 320.

¹¹⁴ For example, Francis L. *The Values Debate* (2001) cited in Francis and Pocock 'Teenage Religion and Values'; p.307.

¹¹⁵ Francis, L.J. and Robbins, M. 'Belonging without believing' (2004) cited in Francis and Pocock 'Teenage Religion and Values'; p.314.

A short form of the *Religious Status Inventory* (subsequently RSInv-10) was designed by Francis and Pocock to assess 'religious maturity'.¹¹⁶ The sample was 226 students from seminaries and bible colleges and covered a range of different Christian denominations. As the definition of religious maturity proved controversial in the original *Religious Status Inventory*, RSInv-10 uses a five point Likert scale questionnaire to achieve a new measure of maturity. Based on Maloney's definition of religious maturity¹¹⁷ this research still proved difficult to measure as many of the scales were conceptually rather than empirically based. For our purpose of investigating challenges to catechesis, RSInv-10 contains some key impressions of religious maturity amongst Christians and strengthens the view that Catholic formation is not something easily measured.

Ann Casson evidences a 'fragmented Catholic identity from elements of the Catholic faith tradition'.¹¹⁸ Her research used interviews to outline how Catholic teenagers perceive their Catholic identity. She measured their responses against Hervieu-L  ger's theories about religious identity and applied her findings to Catholic schools. Although her research is not directly applicable to catechesis it does tell us that Catholic teenagers have varied and uncertain views about what it means to be a Catholic. Many of the young people claimed that being Catholic was to do with holding certain beliefs although they appeared uncertain as to what these beliefs were and did not necessarily agree with them. Casson argues that her participants' perceptions of Catholic identity correspond to Hervieu- L  ger's (1998) 'pilgrim type';¹¹⁹ they were unrestricted by Church doctrine and their identity was subject to change, although they rejected neither the tradition nor being 'Catholic'. The results highlight that a

¹¹⁶ Francis, L.J. and Pocock, N. 'Assessing Religious Maturity: The development of a Short Form of the Religious Status Inventory (RSInv-S10)' *Journal of Empirical Theology* 20.2, (2007) 179 – 199.

¹¹⁷ Cited in Francis and Pocock, 'Assessing Religious Maturity' p.198.

¹¹⁸ Casson, A. 'The right to 'bricolage': Catholic pupils' perception of their religious identity and the implications for Catholic Schools in England *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2011) 207 – 218, quotation p.207.

¹¹⁹ Casson 'The right to bricolage' p.215.

social 'Catholic' identity was acceptable as part of being at a Catholic school. This study does give a further indication of how some young people may see themselves as Catholic when they begin confirmation catechesis. A weakness of this study is that its sample size is small and limited to Catholic schools. For a more accurate reflection of how young people see themselves as Catholic, it would be necessary to increase the sample size and compare results with young Catholics who are in non-Catholic schools.

These adjacent studies have evidenced that empirical evidence such as the frequency of mass attendance and whether or not a respondent believes in God can be used to collect a statistical evidence base which can be drawn on for further research. It helps us identify some barriers to catechesis and know where to look in finding out how these barriers might be addressed. The reluctance of many Catholics to self-identify as Catholics and their uncertainty over what this means is a clear indicator of a lack of formation in the families and a significant challenge to effective catechesis. To gain a real insight into the meaning of what it is to be formed as a Catholic and to gather data about spiritual formation, which includes the nuances of being in communion with Christ, qualitative data collection using interviews would be recommended.¹²⁰

Conclusion

By investigating different contemporary sources we have been able to evidence that key barriers to catechesis are increasing global and familial secularization, omissions in content and untrained catechists. The Church recognizes these problems and communicates them but the evidence suggests that this communication is not being fully received at the level of

¹²⁰ For example to investigate how far young people are formed in their faith as a result of confirmation preparation programmes, it would be possible to replicate some of the before and after type questionnaire data collection used in PP08, but for the best results this would need to be followed up with a large representative sample of interviews. Account would be taken of age, location, and whether or not participants have Catholic parents and attend Catholic schools.

domestic and particular Church. The barriers to catechesis we have identified arguably also hinder the extent to which published apostolic exhortations and encyclicals do reach the people. However, we have also seen a climate of great hope for spiritual renewal within the Church's work for new evangelization as exemplified by the positive changes brought about in the lives of young Catholics by WYD.

In discussing challenges to catechesis which are specific to confirmation preparation we need to be very aware of the need for catechetical renewal that will inspire young people in their homes and parishes, and lead to a new sense of their relationship with Christ. The evidence that less than a quarter young Catholics interviewed believed in a God who is involved in their lives and three-quarters of same sample were unaware of the Holy Spirit¹²¹ is a cause for concern and should prompt us to look further into the means of catechetical renewal. As we have seen in the Introduction the Church is calling for a closer integration of the sacraments of initiation and has reclaimed the words 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' in the liturgy of confirmation. The discussion of contemporary challenges to catechesis gives us every reason to uncover the meaning of 'seal' as an image of the Holy Spirit to reignite young peoples' understanding of the Spirit in their lives. Bringing the 'seal of the Spirit' into confirmation catechesis is one small solution to a single element of the social and ecclesial problems that the Church is addressing through the new evangelization. However as a catechetical resource it could potentially make a big difference if it is able to bring about a new Christocentric-Trinitarian understanding of what it means to be confirmed. From here we have two key issues of content to take us from this investigation into the next phase of our research into the 'seal'. If the theological understanding that underpins catechesis is not sound, the knowledge and understanding in the catechesis remains unsound – hence we must be very clear about exactly what the 'seal of the Spirit' means, historically, theologically and

¹²¹ van Duyvenbode, *Mapping the Terrain* p.2, p.4.

liturgically if we are to be able to bring it in to catechesis. But first, we need to be more clear about the current provision of confirmation catechesis and investigate how far the content provides for young people to understand what it means to 'be sealed' in line with the four catechetical themes of belonging, authentication, a down payment on salvation and post-confirmation mission.¹²²

¹²² Identified out of CCC 1121 (Introduction to this thesis).

CHAPTER 2

PUBLISHED PROGRAMMES FOR CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Introduction

The discussion of contemporary challenges to confirmation catechesis in Chapter One indicates that young people may well not be prepared to receive the sacraments as fully as the Church would like, and that their understanding of confirmation as a whole is sparse.

This chapter aims to establish the extent to which the catechetical content of confirmation preparation programmes provides for candidates to understand what it means to be 'sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.' There are two parts to this research: an investigation of catechetical materials for confirmation in use before the Second Vatican Council and a survey of published confirmation programmes in contemporary use. Earlier catechetical materials are investigated to discern what sort of catechesis was provided before the rite of confirmation was changed. It is likely that some writers of confirmation preparation programmes after the second Vatican Council were brought up on materials published before the second Vatican Council and may have remained unaware of important themes, or neglected them as they may not have appealed to modern learning and teaching pedagogy.

The current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (subsequently *Catechism*) is used as a benchmark to help identify what the programmes are omitting that the Church seems to want people to comprehend by 'be sealed...' The survey shall determine the relation of confirmation 'sealing' in particular to the four themes set out in the Introduction.

For the purpose of this investigation the term 'Church' is used specifically to mean the official teaching of the authorities in the Catholic Church, such as the Council of Trent, the

Second Vatican Council, the bishops who authorize catechisms and the liturgical authority. The difference between catechists and 'Church' is significant in that the catechists' authority is semi-official; catechetical texts which they produced are evaluated for their relation to the Church's teaching. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent*¹ and the current *Catechism*² comprise key sources for finding out what the Church wants people to understand with regard to the sacraments. This information is more accessible after the Second Vatican Council because the new rites were put forward with explanatory texts.

According to the current *Catechism* the seal is a sacramental 'character' conferred in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and holy orders. This 'sacramental character'³ is ineradicable, forming 'an indelible spiritual mark'⁴. In confirmation it conforms the recipient to Christ through sharing in his priesthood, and perfects the seal of baptism by empowering him/her to engage in Christian mission and worship. The 'seal' resides in the soul, remaining even if grace is lost, as a pledge of promised salvation.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the catechetical materials in the survey.

¹ *Catechism of the Council of Trent* McHugh, J., O.P. and Callan, C., O.P., New York: Joseph F. Wagner 1923p.199. (page numbers are used in the absence of separate catechetical references in this version).

² *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (revised edition) London: Geoffrey Chapman 1999 (1121, 1274, 1296, 1300-1305 are key texts for 'seal').

³ CCC1121.

⁴ CCC 1304.

Table 1.

Catechetical Materials before Vatican II			
Author	Title	Date	Type
Canon Cafferata	<i>The Catechism Simply Explained</i>	First published 1897 Revised Edition 1954	Instruction for converts
R. Challoner	<i>The Catholic Christian instructed in the sacraments, sacrifice, ceremonies and observances of the Church</i>	First published 1737 Undated 18th edition	Catechetical text
F.H. Drinkwater	<i>Doctrine for the Juniors: A Teachers' aid-book with children of pre-catechism age</i>	First published 1933 Revised edition 1948	Catechetical text for use by Catholic teachers
Mary Eaton	<i>The Faith for Children from 7 to 14</i>	1925	Children's catechetical text
Denys Rutledge, O.S.B.	<i>Catechism through the Liturgy Part II The Sacraments</i>	1949	Catechetical text
Bishop Shine	<i>The Catholic Faith: Course of Instructions for Converts</i>	1928	Instruction for converts
Catholic Truth Society	<i>A Catechism of Christian Doctrine</i>	1933 Revised edition 1966	Catechetical text
The Holy See	<i>The Explanatory Catechism of Christian Doctrine</i>	1921	Summary of the Catechism

Catechetical Materials since 1990			
Author	Title	Date	Type
S. Gomez, and J. Kings	<i>In the Spirit</i>	1995	Catholic and Anglican Confirmation programme
Diana Klein	<i>Preparing to be confirmed</i>	2002	Confirmation programme
W.J Koplik and J.E. Brady	<i>We Celebrate Confirmation</i>	1990	Confirmation programme
Maryvale Institute	<i>Gifted in the Spirit</i>	1993	Confirmation programme
Dora Nash	<i>Confirmed in the Faith</i>	2003	Confirmation programme
M. Potter and N. Bavidge	<i>Welcome the Spirit</i>	1993	Confirmation programme
Thomas Zanzig	<i>Confirmed in a Faithful Community</i>	2001	A Senior High School Confirmation Process

Table 1. (cont.)

CATECHETICAL MATERIALS BEFORE 1966

'I sign thee with the sign of the cross and I confirm thee with the Chrism of salvation' is the form of confirmation, but it is not the sum of catechesis, nor the total of the liturgy. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* and the liturgy are compared with instructional texts to identify any areas of dissonance between what the Church wants to convey about the sacrament of confirmation and the 'received catechesis'. A survey of the confirmation catechesis provided in eight books of Catholic instruction and a comparison of them with the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* suggests that confirmation has a strong emphasis on being marked as a 'soldier of Christ'⁵ for the spiritual battle to come:

A baptized person, when anointed with the sacred Chrism by the bishop, with the accompanying words: *I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the Chrism of salvation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy*

⁵ Cat. Trent p.200.

Ghost becomes stronger with the strength of a new power and thus begins to be a perfect soldier of Christ.⁶

The investigation reveals that candidates were taught through the metaphor of 'soldier of Christ' and examines references to confirmation as 'strengthening' and 'perfecting'.

Confirmation 'equips' Christians for 'battle',⁷ although references to 'seal' as a down-payment on salvation are obscure.

But what did the Church intend young people to comprehend by being a 'perfected soldier of Christ'? The image connects the metaphor of a soldier to the historical practice of military sealing but is evidenced in the context of post-baptismal rites as early as the fifth century Pentecost homily of Faustus of Riez. According to De Clerk⁸, Faustus referred to being 'strengthened for the strife' and 'fortified' after baptism. Furthermore, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* refers to 'distinct testimonies'⁹ from St. Ambrose and St. Augustine on the reality of the sacrament of confirmation and quotes 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby you were sealed' (Eph. 4:30). Chrism is explained as the 'remote matter'¹⁰ of confirmation and scriptural and New Testament imagery used by the Fathers¹¹ is evidenced.

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to describe confirmation¹² which illustrates the phrase 'the divine power which, as a principal cause, operates in the sacrament'.¹³ Hence it is evident that the Church wanted people to understand confirmation as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

⁶ Cat. Trent p.199.

⁷ Cat. Trent p.201.

⁸ Cited by De Clerk in De Clerk, P. 'Towards a Consensus on Confirmation' *Studia Liturgica* 26 (1996) p.194.

⁹ Cat. Trent p.200.

¹⁰ Cat. Trent p.203.

¹¹ A full investigation of 'sealing' with reference to patristic texts from the first to fifth centuries takes place in Chapter Five.

¹² Cat. Trent p.207 quotes Acts 2:2, 4.

¹³ Cat. Trent p.205.

The Explanatory Catechism of 1921 states that the purpose of confirmation is to receive the Holy Spirit for spiritual strengthening and perfecting.¹⁴ Drinkwater explains this strengthening as the 'inward grace' which accompanies the 'outward sign' of the imposition of hands and the mark of the cross with Chrism.¹⁵ Similarly Challoner had stated that the Holy Spirit is given at confirmation by the imposition of hands, 'prayer accompanied with the unction or the anointing of their foreheads with Chrism'.¹⁶ As a result the Holy Spirit 'strengthens' the soul. Eaton agrees that the Holy Spirit is given through anointing with Chrism and quotes Cyril of Jerusalem: "While thy body is anointed with visible Chrism, thy soul is sanctified by the Holy life-giving Spirit."¹⁷ Cafferata¹⁸ and Rutledge¹⁹ both compare the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation to Pentecost. Cafferata explains that it confers an increase of grace. Neither Shine²⁰ nor *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*²¹ mentions the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or Pentecost. The 'special outpouring' referred to in the current *catechism* is therefore present more by implication than by direct reference in most of the texts surveyed. It is evident in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, nonetheless, in the words of Acts 2:2-4 in which the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is described as the origin of the sacrament of confirmation.²² CCC 1302 shows the 'special outpouring of the Holy Spirit' as a specific effect of confirmation to enable people to understand that they are sharing in the experience of the apostles at

¹⁴ *The Explanatory Catechism of Christian Doctrine* London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd. 1921 262 p.47.

¹⁵ Drinkwater, F.H. *Doctrine for the Juniors: A Teachers' aid-book with children of pre-catechism age*, London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd. 1948 p.41.

¹⁶ Challoner, R. *The Catholic Christian instructed*, Dublin: James Duffy and Co. Ltd (no date) p.56.

¹⁷ Eaton, M. *The Faith for Children from 7 to 14*, London: Sands and Co. 1925, 264 p.121. (The quotation is unreferenced but the date AD 347 given. The *Catechetical and Mystagogical Lectures* attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem are examined in Chapter 6 of this thesis).

¹⁸ Cafferata, Canon, *The Catechism Simply Explained*, London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd. New Revised Edition 1954.

¹⁹ Rutledge, D., O.S.B. *Catechism through the Liturgy Part II The Sacraments*, London: Douglas Organ 1949.

²⁰ Shine, Bishop *The Catholic Faith: Course of Instructions for Converts*, London: Catholic Truth Society 1928.

²¹ *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine* London: Catholic Truth Society 1966.

²² Cat. Trent p.207.

Pentecost in a way which was not clearly expressed in much catechetical material before the Second Vatican Council.²³

The following survey examines catechetical provision for confirmation before the Second Vatican Council, by seeking the four themes. That these themes of 'sealing' were implicit in Church teaching prior to the Second Vatican Council is evident in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*:

But in Confirmation three things are chiefly to be noted: the divine power which, as a principal cause, operates in the Sacrament; the strength of mind and soul which is imparted by the sacred unction to the faithful unto salvation; and finally, the sign impressed on him who is to enter unto the warfare of Christ.²⁴

This text implies the themes of belonging and authentication by the phrase 'the sign impressed on him'. It suggests that the 'sign' performs the function of 'seal' or sacramental 'character'. Authentication is expressed and mission implied in the phrase 'is to enter unto the warfare of Christ'. The theme of a down-payment on salvation is evident from the sacramental purpose of strengthening, in the present and 'by the sacred unction to the faithful unto salvation'. Arguably, therefore the four catechetical themes are present in this text from the Catechism of the Council of Trent, but their meaning requires some more careful analysis.

Signo te signo crucis et confirmo te Chrismate salutis shows the term 'sign' used rather than 'seal', suggesting that it points to Jesus through the cross. It is reasonable to accept that signing with the sign of the cross conveyed the impression of a spiritual seal, given the liturgical-historical background. 'Confirm' with 'Chrism of salvation' suggests strengthening or ratification of what was accomplished at baptism. Although these words do not refer directly to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Church's desire to convey more than the essential form alone is evident from reference to a 'divine power'.²⁵ The phrase 'the

²³ The effect of the sacrament of confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost (CCC 1302).

²⁴ Cat. Trent p.205.

²⁵ 'Rite of Confirmation Cat. Trent p.199.

sign impressed on him' is explained further in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* in that confirmation brings about an increase in grace and imprints a 'character'.²⁶ The 'character' of baptism, confirmation and holy orders is connected with authentication with reference to Augustine's comparison of sacramental 'character' with 'bodily mark impressed on the soldier' with which his service is 'recognized and approved'.²⁷ 'Character' is thus identified with 'seal' in baptism, confirmation and holy orders, as impressing a mark. The 'power of the sacrament' of holy orders is referred to as 'character' where it is explained as 'a certain interior mark impressed on the soul'.²⁸ The Church wanted people to understand that the sign of the cross and 'Chrism of salvation' does leave a permanent impression, changing the soul forever.

'Seal', 'character' and the mark of belonging

The second effect of the sacraments...peculiar to three, Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders – is the character which they impress on the soul. When the Apostle says: *God hath anointed us, who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts*, he not obscurely describes by the word *sealed* a character, the property of which is to impress a seal and mark.²⁹

Where the terms 'seal' and 'character' appear in the eight catechetical instruction books considered, they emphasize a sacramental 'mark' on the soul and reflect Aquinas's explanation of 'character'.³⁰ *The Explanatory Catechism*³¹ emphasizes washing rather than 'sealing' for baptism but describes the sacramental 'character' for baptism, confirmation and holy orders which is a 'mark or seal which cannot be effaced'. It states that sacraments of baptism and confirmation can be received only once because of 'character', implying that a permanent change has taken place.

²⁶ Cat. Trent p.210.

²⁷ Augustine, St. quoted in Cat. Trent p.159.

²⁸ Cat. Trent p.337 The development of concepts of 'sealing' and 'character' outlined by St. Thomas Aquinas which underpin the Council of Trent's understanding are investigated in chapter five of this thesis.

²⁹ Cat. Trent p.159 quotes 2 Cor. 1:21-22.

³⁰ *Summa Theologiae* III q.63.

³¹ *The Explanatory Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 253, 254.

Eaton³² explains that baptism confers a 'seal' which leaves a 'grand and noble' ineradicable mark on the soul and identifies us as 'children of God'. The second 'great mark or seal' is conferred at confirmation during which Christians are 'stamped as belonging to God's army'. The third 'seal' is holy orders. Eaton explains that these seals are also identified as 'characters' in the Catechism. Although no catechetical reference is given, Eaton's explanation of 'character' is Thomist and recalls the description of sacramental character as a distinguishing mark impressed by baptism, confirmation and holy orders in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*.³³

Challoner³⁴ focuses on how baptism with water forgives sins and confers grace. The 'sacrament and character of baptism' is differentiated from 'the grace of the sacrament'. Challoner describes confirmation as 'anointing with the holy Chrism'. Recalling the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Challoner quotes 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 to explain that confirmation 'imprints a character or spiritual mark on the soul' like baptism. It communicates the grace of the Holy Spirit and is unrepeatable. Preceding Eaton, Challoner provides a similar portrait of 'character' which is both Thomist and in line with the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, but less reliant on military imagery. Earlier and more concise version than Eaton, *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*³⁵ provides a succinct statement that baptism, confirmation and holy orders confer a 'character' which is an indelible mark or seal on the soul.

Shine³⁶ does not use the terms 'seal' or 'character' although he describes baptism as 'mark of a child of God' and states that confirmation 'leaves a mark on the soul'. Similarly, Drinkwater³⁷ make no direct reference to 'seal' or 'character' at all but focuses on the 'outward sign' and 'inward grace' of baptism, confirmation and holy orders. Drinkwater

³² Eaton, *Faith for Children*, Q253 p.115; Q254 p.116.

³³ Cat. Trent p.159.

³⁴ Challoner, *The Catholic Christian* p.45, p.56 , p.58.

³⁵ *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine* 253,254, p.43.

³⁶ Shine, *The Catholic Faith*, p.41, p.42.

³⁷ Drinkwater, *Doctrine for Juniors*.

describes the meaning of 'sacrament' in a way that was popular at the time and in keeping with 'its various significations'.³⁸ Drinkwater's catechesis recalls the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*'s explanation of a sacrament as a sign with the 'power to effect'³⁹ the interior action of the Holy Spirit.

Rutledge⁴⁰ explains that by receiving the character of baptism, confirmation and holy orders the soul becomes the 'image and likeness' of Christ. He uses terminology of 'sealing' and 'character' and teaches that the 'seal' of confirmation is for the 'grown up' and 'fighter'. 'Character' is explained as a seal on a document in which an impression on hot sealing wax depicts the image of Christ on soul.

Cafferata covers all points raised variously in the other texts by stating that baptism seals Christians, by confirmation they are stamped 'as soldiers of Christ';⁴¹ confirmation confers a character⁴² which is indelible⁴³ and equated to 'seal'. This summary reflects the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*: 'by the word *sealed* a character, the property of which is to impress a seal and mark'.⁴⁴

'Character' has been used consistently to refer to the transforming, spiritual mark impressed on the soul at baptism, confirmation and holy orders. Throughout the catechetical materials the meaning of 'character' as a mark of belonging is dominated by heavy reliance on the metaphor of a 'soldier of Christ'.

³⁸ Cat. Trent p.141.

³⁹ Cat. Trent p.146.

⁴⁰ Rutledge, *Through the Liturgy* p. 69-70.

⁴¹ Cafferata, *The Catechism Explained*, 254 p.104. NB This text is a revised edition of a text first published in 1897. It is more detailed about confirmation than the other texts in this sample because its purpose is to explain the catechism rather than because it is one of the more modern publications. It would be misleading for the reader to conjecture that this text gives evidence of a growing emphasis on 'sealing' and 'character' between 1921 and 1954.

⁴² Cafferata, *The Catechism Explained*, 253 p.104; 262 p.110.

⁴³ Cafferata, *The Catechism Explained*, 254 p.104.

⁴⁴ Cat. Trent p.159.

Authentication

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* states that a baptized person, when confirmed 'becomes stronger with the strength of a new power, and thus begins to be a perfect soldier of Christ'.⁴⁵ Although the language of becoming a 'soldier of Christ' is not used to describe the effects of confirmation in the modern *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, commission for a special purpose is still implied.

Spiritual empowerment is one of the effects of receiving the 'character' of confirmation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The theme of sealing for authentication is identified through reference to the bishop's words 'I sign thee with the sign of the cross...' in *The Explanatory Catechism*.⁴⁶ Candidates are marked to profess their faith and live 'the lives of good practical Catholics' according to Cafferata.⁴⁷ Challoner maintains that the outward anointing commissions Christian 'soldiers' to witness to Christ⁴⁸ and Drinkwater sees confirmation as authenticating 'soldiers in Christ's army'.⁴⁹ *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*⁵⁰ merely states that the bishop administers confirmation by the imposition of hands and signing with the cross with Chrism.

The blow on the cheek, as part of the surrounding ceremonies, was originally intended as a liturgical sign of peace, although it illustrates the image of a soldier for Christ. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* states that the slap on the cheek is to make the recipient a 'valiant combatant...for the name of Christ'.⁵¹ Rutledge⁵² makes explicit connections between confirmation and authenticating a Christian life by explaining that Christ lives in the recipients and so the seal makes them images of him. For Eaton the recipients are

⁴⁵ Cat. Trent p.199.

⁴⁶ *The Explanatory Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, 265 p.48.

⁴⁷ Cafferata, *The Catechism Explained*, 262 p.110.

⁴⁸ Challoner, *The Catholic Christian* p.62.

⁴⁹ Drinkwater, *Doctrine for Juniors* p.41.

⁵⁰ *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*.

⁵¹ Cat. Trent p.212.

⁵² Rutledge, *Through the Liturgy* Here is a hint of synonymy between the 'seal' as an instrument that does the sealing and 'seal' as the imprint or image it impresses, which Rutledge used to explain as 'character' p.70.

⁵² Eaton, *Faith for Children*, 254 p.116.

confirmed for their duty as 'soldiers of God'⁵³ although authentication is implied by the imagery of enlisting 'once and for all' in the service of 'God's army'. All texts agree that confirmation authenticates recipients to carry out a particular Christian duty. A spiritually empowering seal retained forever in the soul is implied in these texts, although not always made explicit. The term 'character' occurs more commonly than 'sealing' although sealing is suggested by Rutledge's wax imprint metaphor and contained implicitly in the commission of the soldier of Christ in other texts.

This 'character' perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in baptism, and 'the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and as it were officially'.⁵⁴

Down-payment on salvation

Emphasis on baptism for regeneration and cleansing, and confirmation for strengthening for the spiritual battle to come is consistent throughout the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* but the relation between confirmation and a down-payment on salvation is difficult to perceive beyond the description of the sanctifying power of the sacred Chrism of confirmation.⁵⁵ The prayer for the consecration of the Chrism on Maundy Thursday is clearer about the salvific purpose of the sacraments. That sacraments have an everlasting effect is emphasized in the petition that the baptized will be made 'sharers in eternal life and heirs of heavenly glory':

Ut sit his qui renati fuerint ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto chrisma salutis, eosque æternæ vitæ participes et caelestis gloriae faciat esse consortes.⁵⁶

The phrase 'saving Chrism' connects the sacraments to the pledge on salvation which was acknowledged in the Church before the Second Vatican Council, and is represented in the phrase 'Chrism of salvation' in the former rite of confirmation. This is important to bear in mind as the connection between confirmation and a down-payment on salvation is only observable by implication in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* and barely observable

⁵⁴ CCC 1305 quotes Aquinas ST III, 72, 5 ad 2.

⁵⁵ Cat. Trent p.205.

⁵⁶ *Ordo Benedictendi Oleum Catechumenorum et Infirmorum et Conficiendi Chrisma* Vatican: Polygot Press, 1971, 25.p.15.

in the catechetical materials examined. The prayer for the consecration of Chrism expresses that the saving oil of Chrism recalls the anointing of priest, kings, prophets and martyrs and it is used to perfect what has already taken place in baptism. The phrase 'grace of strength'⁵⁷ could be taken to infer the sacrament of confirmation pointing to a future time and thus to a guarantee on the promise of salvation. This is similarly inferred from the phrase: '*stay you in the city*, said our Lord and Saviour, speaking of this sacrament, *until you be clothed with power from on high*'.⁵⁸

The relation between the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation and a guarantee of salvation is explicit in the form of confirmation: 'I confirm thee with the Chrism of salvation'. *The Explanatory Catechism*⁵⁹ and Shine⁶⁰ both mention the bishop's words without explanation. The eternal effects of sealing are mentioned in Eaton⁶¹ whilst Cafferata states that 'Chrism makes us strong that we may save our souls'.⁶² He emphasizes anointing as strengthening rather than a pledge on salvation. Challoner considers the relation between baptism, confirmation and salvation. He describes baptismal anointing as 'kings and priests are anointed' with Chrism. He quotes St Paul: '...the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts'⁶³ to 'prove' apostles practised confirmation. Challoner implies a connection between confirmation and salvation by verifying that confirmation is a sacrament because it is a 'visible sign of invisible grace'.⁶⁴ He states that confirmation is not essential for salvation but advisable, especially for those who may struggle in their faith.⁶⁵ He does not however explain the meaning of 'Chrism of salvation' to illustrate the sacrament of confirmation pointing to the Church's hope of future glory. Potential spiritual warfare is emphasized across all the materials with little focus on the prospect of salvation.

⁵⁷ Cat. Trent p.209.

⁵⁸ Cat. Trent p.210 quoting Luke 24:49.

⁵⁹ *The Explanatory Catechism of Christian Doctrine* 1921 265, p.62.

⁶⁰ Shine, *The Catholic Faith*, p.4.3.

⁶¹ Eaton, *Faith for Children* Q253, p.115.

⁶² Cafferata, *The Catechism Explained* 265 p.p.112.

⁶³ Challoner, *The Catholic Christian*, p.56 quotes 2 Cor. 1:21-22.

⁶⁴ Challoner, *The Catholic Christian*, p.57.

⁶⁵ Challoner, *The Catholic Christian* p.59.

Post-confirmation mission in conformity to Christ

...Confirmation, by virtue of which growth and perfect spiritual strength are imparted to the faithful.⁶⁶

From the etymological root *confirmatio*, strengthening and perfecting are delineated as outcomes of confirmation although the exact meaning of 'perfected' as completing baptism is implied rather than explained in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*. Nonetheless it clearly emphasizes a post-confirmation mission of 'spiritual conquest'; Christians are fortified to 'fight manfully and resist their most wicked foes'.⁶⁷ Belonging to the army of Christ, as an adult member of the Church, sums up the post-confirmation mission. This military metaphor encompasses conformity to the role of Christ's soldier rather than an explicit Christ-likeness. Emphasis on spiritual warfare suggests that the Church wanted people to understand that confirmation strengthened recipients to renounce evil and take on the example set by Christ.

All the survey texts emphasize that confirmation brings the responsibility of mission as an adult member of the church, described through the metaphor of a soldier of Christ.

Rutledge compares the effect of being spiritually 'grown up'⁶⁸ to the apostles' experience at Pentecost. Challoner states that confirmation means to enlist 'as a soldier of Christ'.

Given his commission the Christian is 'obliged...to fight manfully the battles of his Lord'.⁶⁹ Similarly Cafferata explains that Christians are given the grace at confirmation to live as 'strong Christians', as Christ's soldiers.⁷⁰ Eaton interprets the metaphor of a soldier of Christ to mean that the marked Christian has 'fought for' God by initiation and the 'seal' infers lifetime participation in the mission of Christ: 'we enter God's army for life'.⁷¹

Confirmation makes Christians strong and imposes the responsibility of spiritual warfare:

⁶⁶ Cat. Trent p.201.

⁶⁷ Cat. Trent p.211.

⁶⁸ Rutledge, *Through the Liturgy*, p.91.

⁶⁹ Challoner, *The Catholic Christian*, p.59.

⁷⁰ Cafferata, *The Catechism Explained*, 262 p.110.

⁷¹ Eaton, *Faith for Children*, Q253, p.115.

‘you can and must fight for God’.⁷² Eaton relates confirmation to the mission of knights of old as a deliberate attempt to attract children’s attention, and suggests ‘obedience’ activities that they might ‘win their spurs’.⁷³ Eaton’s is the only catechetical text in the survey that makes mention of any further catechetical pedagogy.

Conclusion to catechetical materials before 1966

Evidence from the survey texts shows that confirmation was understood and taught to others as conferring an indelible mark of belonging to Jesus, variously referred to as the ‘seal’ or ‘character’. References to scripture and tradition are sufficient to elicit that ‘confirmation’ rites were understood to have been part of early Christian initiation summed up in Ephesians 1:13:

You ... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,...

Furthermore the mark of adult membership of the Church at confirmation is God given, as stated in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22:

It is God who gives us with you a sure place in Christ and has both anointed us and marked us with his seal, giving us as pledge the Spirit in our hearts.

The texts in the survey do not detail what it means to receive the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit but focus emphatically on the military element. The military image does little to explain confirmation, as part of the process of Christian initiation, in relation to baptism and the Eucharist. Baptism and the Eucharist are discussed, largely due to the generic catechetical purpose of the materials. There is little detail about the relation between baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist and that which exists is likely to be because some texts originally were published at a time when the Church’s teaching on the order of sacraments was still upheld in practice with Eucharist following confirmation. This may help explain why a greater emphasis on the relation between the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, in the process of Christian initiation, was given as a key reason

⁷² Eaton, *Faith for Children*, Q262, p.120.

⁷³ Eaton, *Faith for Children*, Q264, p.123.

to revise the 'Rite of Confirmation' following the Second Vatican Council.⁷⁴ The absence of teaching on what it means to receive a pledge on salvation through the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation indicates catechetical and theological difficulties in conveying exactly what confirmation has to offer that baptism has not. The term 'grace' is used seldom with a potentially confusing range of meanings. In summation confirmation catechesis using the image of the 'seal of the Spirit' has been found to be implicit and limited in catechetical texts published before the Second Vatican Council, although some of the key concepts of sealing did exist within the language of 'signing' and 'character'. The four themes of 'sealing' were variously represented. There has been little specifically identified in the catechetical materials which would have enabled confirmands to understand fully the bishop's words 'I sign thee with the sign of the cross and confirm thee with the Chrism of salvation'.

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION PROGRAMMES PUBLISHED AFTER THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The following survey of modern published programmes for confirmation investigates an important ingredient of catechetical provision for young people to understand the meaning of 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'. It is not intended as a review to establish which is the better catechetical instrument, but rather to establish the extent to which the catechetical themes of 'sealing' are reflected in current confirmation learning and teaching materials. These themes are taken as representative of what the Church is trying to convey about confirmation for the purpose of this survey. It is also considered that there may be a programme which corresponds to the *Catechism* but uses different terminology, such as reflecting outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Pentecost event without an explicit connection to the themes. Conclusions will be drawn in the light of how far published

⁷⁴ Second Vatican Council, SC 71: Flannery A. (ed.) *Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, Dublin: Dominican Publications 1981; The Rite of Confirmation 1976 p.289.

programmes provide for young people to understand what Church teaches about confirmation.

This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more perfectly to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his body in faith and love. They are so marked with the character or the seal of the Lord that the sacrament of confirmation cannot be repeated.⁷⁵

These words from the introduction to the 'Rite of Confirmation' express how the Church wishes people to understand that they are permanently, spiritually marked as witnesses, conformed to Christ. The homily to the 'Rite of Confirmation' also describes the gift of the Holy Spirit as a 'spiritual sign and seal'.⁷⁶ The context for sealing of both Pentecost and the baptism of Jesus also expresses the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The effects of sealing are described as perfecting and becoming more Christ-like. A sense of belonging and identity is expressed in the homily through membership of 'Christ's body' as well as images of 'seal' and the sign of the cross. A call to participate in post-confirmation mission is articulated through the instruction to those being confirmed to serve, guided by the Holy Spirit. Authentication is expressed by reference to anointing as 'Christ himself was anointed by the Spirit' at his baptism. The liturgy itself reinforces the homily's outline of the meaning of confirmation through the actions of the laying on of hands, epiclesis addressed to the Father to send the Spirit of the seven gifts, and anointing with the accompanying words 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'.

The initial scrutiny of a group of contemporary published confirmation programmes suggested a pattern in which post-confirmation mission was the most fully represented theme with little or no reference to a down-payment on salvation. Further scrutiny was conducted to elicit more about how the identified themes are represented and relate to one another. The potential effects on the candidates' understanding of what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' are identified. Patterns and omissions which

⁷⁵ 'Rite of Confirmation' p.298.

⁷⁶ 'Rite of Confirmation' p.307.

potentially have a significant effect on candidates' understanding of confirmation are discussed, especially where it appears that published catechetical materials may not be fully in line with the teaching of the Church represented in the *Catechism*.

An overview of the programmes

Part of the 'Lifespan' faith programme, *In the Spirit*⁷⁷ claims to be a medium for sharing religious experience rather than a theology book. It prepares Catholic and Anglican teenagers to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation through 'exploration and experience of Christian beliefs'.⁷⁸ The programme states that Catholic confirmation comprises the imposition of the bishop's hands and anointing and that it 'involves the Holy Spirit'.⁷⁹ However, there seems to be discrepancy from the outset as to whether the 'gifts of the Holy Spirit'⁸⁰ are received at confirmation or inbuilt in the whole tradition.

Differentiation is unclear between receiving the Holy Spirit at baptism and the 'special outpouring of the Holy Spirit'⁸¹ which 'completes baptism'⁸² and includes the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit at confirmation. The suggestion that confirmation merely 'involves' the Holy Spirit together with hesitancy over the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' and seven 'gifts'⁸³, shows how catechetical programmes do not necessarily uphold church teaching. It demonstrates confusion that could easily be transmitted to the candidates.

*Preparing to be confirmed*⁸⁴ follows the model of the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA), with periods of enquiry and catechesis culminating in a celebration of commitment and final preparation period before the sacrament of confirmation. The theme of post-confirmation mission is emphasized, but there is little relation to other catechetical

⁷⁷ Gomez, S. and Kings, J. *In the Spirit: a pre and post- confirmation programme for Catholic and Anglican Teenage Christians*, catechists' and candidates' books, Slough: St. Paul's, 1995.

⁷⁸ Gomez and Kings, *In the Spirit*, catechists' book p.iv.

⁷⁹ Gomez and Kings, *In the Spirit*, catechists' book p.iv.

⁸⁰ Gomez and Kings, *In the Spirit*, catechists' book p.iv.

⁸¹ CCC 1302.

⁸² CCC 1304.

⁸³ Hesitancy over the seven gifts is not new. Aquinas emphasizes the importance of the seven gifts in exact proportion to charity, but does not link them with confirmation.

⁸⁴ Klein, D. *Preparing to be confirmed*, Essex: McCrimmons 2002.

themes. Klein's personal secular experience and that of the candidates predominates the exploration of their faith journey. Klein emphasizes the humanity of Christ and suggests separateness between Christ and the Holy Spirit without explaining the meaning of receiving the gift of the Spirit at baptism or confirmation. She rightly tells candidates that at baptism 'we are invited to be priest, prophet and king' and baptised people 'are told'... 'to carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world'⁸⁵ and states that at confirmation 'the Church prays that the Holy Spirit may always be your helper and your guide'.⁸⁶ A connection between baptism and confirmation is not developed. The phrase that confirmation strengthens, 'completing the grace of baptism'⁸⁷ implies an incomplete understanding of the phrase 'like baptism which it completes'⁸⁸ because it is set in an over-simplified theology which arguably suggests that baptismal grace is incomplete. Although strengthening is correct, there is nothing to uphold Church teaching on the sacramental character of the baptismal seal which cannot be repeated.⁸⁹ Candidates are likely to share in the author's apparent misunderstanding due to inconsistent theological understanding in the programme.

*Gifted in the Spirit*⁹⁰ considers 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'. Grounded in the paschal mystery, as evidenced in the introduction, it applies the life of Christ to confirmation. The key message is clearly stated:

Your confirmation will bring you all the fruits and gifts and strength of the Holy Spirit.⁹¹

Gifted in the Spirit is built around this message. As Jesus sent his Spirit to help his disciples, confirmation enables candidates to participate in Jesus' team.⁹² Post-confirmation mission is emphasized and the meaning of participating in the wider Christian

⁸⁵ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.38.

⁸⁶ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.33.

⁸⁷ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.9.

⁸⁸ CCC 1304.

⁸⁹ See CCC 1272 -1273.

⁹⁰ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit: A Confirmation Workbook* Chichester: Words Ink, 1993.

⁹¹ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.viii.

⁹² Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* Lesson 1: 'Working Together in the Church' p.1-28.

community and ‘spreading God’s love’⁹³ is explored. Candidates learn how to recognize their own abilities and use them to the greater good of the Christian community, following the example of Christian living. Christian virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Spirit help candidates to focus on being part of the Church and abide by Christian precepts.

*Confirmed in the Faith*⁹⁴ emphasizes post-confirmation mission and has a theological approach, with a notable lack of emphasis on practical application or ‘emotive’ catechesis. Although it has no direct references to a down-payment on salvation *Confirmed in the Faith* clearly integrates the other catechetical themes, and also has a stronger explicit focus on being ‘sealed’ and receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit than other programmes in the investigation.

*Welcome the Spirit*⁹⁵ is based on the structure of RCIA and emphasizes post-confirmation mission and belonging to a community of faith. A presentation of Pope John Paul II’s words sets the tone for the programme: candidates learn that the Holy Spirit will ‘confirm’ their faith, ‘seal’ them ‘in his love’ and ‘strengthen’ them to serve him. They are told that the Holy Spirit will enable them ‘to witness to the truth of the gospel’ in the name of Jesus and participate in ‘the Church’s fight against sin’. Pope John Paul II’s words include a brief outline of the expectation that ‘strengthened by the Holy Spirit’ candidates will become ‘active members of the People of God’.⁹⁶ This presentation is not explained in the catechesis which follows.

*We celebrate Confirmation*⁹⁷ presents itself as a complete programme to bring young people into the centre of the life of the Christian community. It is characterized by

⁹³ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.15.

⁹⁴ Nash, D. *Confirmed in the Faith*, Leominster: Gracewing 2003.

⁹⁵ Potter, M.B and Bavidge, N. *Welcome the Spirit*, London: Geoffrey Chapman 1993.

⁹⁶ Potter and Bavidge *Welcome the Spirit*, p. 25 quotes Pope John Paul II, Coventry Cathedral, Pentecost Sunday 1982.

⁹⁷ Koplik, W.J and Brady, J.E. *We Celebrate Confirmation: Catechist’s Guide*. USA: Silver Burdett and Ginn 1990. NB this resource is paginated with catechists’ pages starting with T and candidates’ pages without a letter prefix.

associated vocabulary such as 'social responsibility', 'commitment' and 'group witness'.⁹⁸

Confirmation as 'outpouring', conformity to Christ, authentication and mission in are evident in the authors' introductory letter to candidates.⁹⁹ Candidates are reminded that they received the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism and that their Christian life is nourished by the Eucharist. They are told that they will receive the Holy Spirit in a 'new way',¹⁰⁰ to change and strengthen them at confirmation. They are also told that their confirmation preparation includes service in the Christian community, prayer, study and personal reflection. Within this short letter the purpose and effects of confirmation are introduced briefly but clearly. The programme itself is presented as a journey to the completion of candidates' Christian initiation and emphasizes the candidates' own experience by 'personalizing confirmation'.

*Confirmed in a Faithful Community*¹⁰¹ has adapted the RCIA model into four sections: *invitation, formation, reflection* and *mission*. It has been written specifically for senior high school students and has an explicit focus on 'active learning'¹⁰² in which the catechist is in the role of a facilitator. The candidates engage in a 'process' of evangelization and catechesis of which personal commitment to the Christian faith 'may be an outcome' but 'is not a pre-requisite for involvement in it'.¹⁰³ Specific confirmation catechesis occurs during the period of *Reflection* in which each session is linked to key texts from the *Catechism* demonstrating its adherence to Church teaching. Catechesis builds on the candidates' experiences of the preceding periods of *Invitation* and *Formation* especially in its focus on becoming more closely united with Christ through Christian scripture and tradition. *Formation 8* focuses on Pentecost as 'the gift of the Spirit and birth of the

⁹⁸ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, introduction p.iv.

⁹⁹ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.T14.

¹⁰⁰ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.T14.

¹⁰¹ Zanzig, T. *Confirmed in a Faithful Community – A Senior High Confirmation Process*, Winona USA: St. Mary's Press, 2001.

¹⁰² Zanzig, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, p.10.

¹⁰³ Zanzig, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, p.18.

Church'.¹⁰⁴ The catechist is advised to end the session 'by noting that Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit are connected in special ways with the sacrament of confirmation' which is the only mention of the connection between Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at confirmation in the whole programme until *Reflection 4* on the gifts. As a background for catechesis this final *Formation* session enables candidates to understand more clearly the Holy Spirit as God who deepens people's relationship with Jesus. CCC1296 which contains the four themes of 'sealing' is one of the recommended catechetical texts for *Reflection 9*. However there is nothing further in the programme to enable the catechist to make the connections between God 'establishing' candidates with Christ, sealing them, giving them a 'guarantee' of divine protection or a mark of belonging in the confirmation catechesis.

'Seal', 'character' and the mark of belonging

Sealing is unrepresented in *In the Spirit* as there are no direct references to 'seal' or sacramental 'character' apart from an unexplained quotation of the bishop's words at confirmation and suggestion that the catechist tells candidates what the oil of Chrism is.¹⁰⁵ This programme only relates confirmation to the theme of an indelible mark in the statement that 'confirmation is an outward sign of your personal commitment to God'.¹⁰⁶ It distorts the Church's teaching that confirmation confers the gift of the Holy Spirit by putting emphasis on the recipient's initiative in the term 'your'. It appears to imply God's belonging to the individual rather than the individual's belonging to God and is at odds with the Church's teaching that by the 'seal' Christians share in the priesthood of Christ.

In *Preparing to be confirmed*, the baptized are invited to share in the priesthood, role of prophet and kingship of Jesus¹⁰⁷ but there is no mention of 'sealing' besides a misquotation

¹⁰⁴ Zanzig, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, p.180.

¹⁰⁵ Gomez and Kings, *In the Spirit*, catechists' book p.47.

¹⁰⁶ Gomez and Kings, *In the Spirit*, candidates' book p.2.

¹⁰⁷ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.38.

of the bishop's words: 'be sealed with the Holy Spirit'.¹⁰⁸ These words are explained as a 'sign and symbol in the sacrament of confirmation' and omit the reference to 'gift' of the Holy Spirit. There is no explanation of the matter and form of confirmation, which together with an adaptation of the bishop's words from the rite of confirmation is potentially confusing to candidates. There is nothing to lead candidates into an appreciation of the transforming effects of confirmation and no reference to a mark of identity or a direct reference to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Gifted in the Spirit explains the theme and language of 'sealing' in relation to the sacraments, especially that of baptism to confirmation. Candidates are taught that confirmation strengthens the grace they received at baptism, and that they will be anointed with Chrism as a 'sign' that they are 'SEALED with the Holy Spirit himself'.¹⁰⁹ They are taught that they are 'sealed' for a purpose: 'to work with and for others'¹¹⁰ and about how the gifts of the Spirit will enable them to carry out their Christian mission. Sealing, in conformity to Christ, is integrated with authentication and post-confirmation mission. It is further addressed in the section 'Sealed with Chrism' which explains anointing with Chrism as 'strengthening',¹¹¹ emphasizing that candidates are anointed as priests, prophets and kings of Christ. God's readiness to seal his love permanently through confirmation is described through reference to the Jewish *phylacteries* and the *shema* and quoting the words 'set me as a seal upon your heart'.¹¹² Sealing is connected to a mark of identity and explained as lasting forever.

Candidates learn that what was started in baptism is 'SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED'¹¹³ at confirmation. Beginning with the candidates' own experience of

¹⁰⁸ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.37.

¹⁰⁹ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.42 (publisher's capitals).

¹¹⁰ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.45.

¹¹¹ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.56.

¹¹² Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.61 quotes Song of Solomon 8:6-7.

¹¹³ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.62 (publisher's capitals).

belonging to clubs, the programme explains that the 'character' of confirmation is a 'special destiny' meaning that they are 'MARKED by God'.¹¹⁴ They learn that the same Spirit of the risen Jesus that they received at baptism will 'pour out all his gifts'¹¹⁵ on them at confirmation and that God will seal them in his love.

Confirmed in the Faith is written with a clear intention to develop the candidates' knowledge and understanding of Jesus in their lives and what it means to 'be sealed'. Sealing is addressed from the outset but not overtly developed until the final session. Here the rite of confirmation is explained with activities and discussion to explain meeting Jesus in the sacrament and the meaning of the matter and form of confirmation. Candidates are invited to discuss what they think the bishop means when he says 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' in the context of seals on 'important documents'¹¹⁶ and what it means in their own lives. They are also directed to Paul's reference to sealing in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. Coming at the end of the preparation programme, it is reasonable to expect that candidates have a background of knowledge and understanding of what happens at confirmation to be able to respond with reference to the dimension of sealing and other catechetical themes. The question 'how does this [sealing] apply to us once we are confirmed?'¹¹⁷ demonstrates that the author is encouraging candidates to relate sealing to their post-confirmation lives. A mark of identity is addressed in the explanation that Christians are marked as belonging to Jesus through the sacraments, although this dimension of receiving the seal of confirmation is not made explicit.

Welcome the Spirit tells candidates during the introductory session that they will be 'sealed' by the Holy Spirit to complete their baptism and strengthen their witness to Jesus. The words of Pope John Paul II provide the language of sealing, outpouring, authentication and post-confirmation mission but this is not made explicit to candidates. Sacramental

¹¹⁴ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.38 (publisher's capitals).

¹¹⁵ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.39.

¹¹⁶ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.55.

¹¹⁷ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.55.

signs and symbols are examined but with no connection to the meaning of 'sealing' except a handout in which candidates are asked to match the action of anointing, hand laying and words 'be sealed' to the appropriate picture. The fourth unit suggests a focal point: 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' which will raise candidates' awareness of the bishop's words. The words are included with the actions of imposition of hands, anointing with oil and signing with the cross as an explanation of the 'sacramental action of confirmation'.¹¹⁸ Candidates are told that the words 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' mean '...all that God is promising to do for us is made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. In confirmation God signs us and gives us in a new and special way the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives'.¹¹⁹ Although it is left to the catechist to explain the bishop's words, the language here does imply unity between God the Father and the Holy Spirit and connects 'sealing' loosely to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through mention of 'power' and 'gift', a mark of identity in which 'God signs us' and potentially a down-payment on salvation through 'all that God is promising for us'. A mark of identity is explicit once in *Welcome the Spirit*: the sacramental action of signing with the cross is denoted as identification with the 'emblem/badge of the followers of Christ'.¹²⁰ The opportunity for candidates to know and understand fully what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' has been omitted. This programme introduces the bishop's words 'Be sealed...' but the explanation is incomplete.

'Sealing' is absent from *We Celebrate Confirmation's Theme One* although confirmation is explained as an 'affirmation of baptism'.¹²¹ The catechist's reflection touches on the relation between confirmation and post-baptismal anointing with no mention either of 'seal' or a mark of identity.¹²² Candidates are introduced to confirmation in terms of

¹¹⁸ Potter and Bavidge *Welcome the Spirit*, p.79.

¹¹⁹ Potter and Bavidge *Welcome the Spirit*, p.80-81.

¹²⁰ Potter and Bavidge *Welcome the Spirit*, p.80.

¹²¹ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.T12.

¹²² For a full investigation of the evolution of concepts of 'sealing' as confirmation developed as a separate sacrament see chapter 5.

themselves and told that Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, provides for them to take up their service in the Christian community. It neglects to mention that they are sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit or that they receive a spiritual mark of identity or character. Baptism is recalled without explanation of the gift of the Spirit, sealing or baptismal anointing. Candidates are asked to write a statement of why they want to participate in confirmation preparation focusing on 'belonging, commitment, relationship to God and to the Church' and 'opportunities for service and growth'. There is no mention of being marked with a seal as claimed by God. The term 'seal of the Chrism' appears in *Theme Two*, together with imposition of hands as 'public signs of personal affirmation'.¹²³ The catechist is instructed to explain that after sealing by the anointing, the Eucharist will signify 'communion with Christ'.¹²⁴ The catechesis contained herein implies that 'sealing' is fairly incidental and is a sign of belonging to the community of Christ rather than a mark of being ontologically changed. The theme of an indelible spiritual mark is conspicuous by its absence. Whilst belonging to the church features as part of what it means to be Christian and there are references to the imposition of hands and anointing, neither is related to a mark of identity. David's anointing by Samuel is used to exemplify the meaning of anointing at confirmation without reference to a spiritual or physical mark. Candidates design their own symbol for confirmation without reference to why a mark of identity might be significant. They are asked to consider groups they belong to which relates to their Christian identity. Candidates read that the bishop will sign them with the cross when he says 'be sealed...' but without explanation.

Sealing is implicit in *Confirmed in a Faithful Community (Reflection 1)* when candidates connect to confirmation through a symbolic acceptance of their baptism. Candidates learn that faith needs to be expressed and the actions of the rite of confirmation are introduced as

¹²³ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.T28.

¹²⁴ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.T29.

hand-laying, anointing and ‘saying the words of confirmation’,¹²⁵ but the words and their meaning are omitted. *Reflection 7* explores ritual actions, symbols and gestures. Again anointing with Chrism and ‘words of confirmation’¹²⁶ are included but the words ‘be sealed’ are omitted. *Reflection 9*: ‘Confirmation: sealed with the Holy Spirit’¹²⁷ sets out to deepen candidates’ understanding of the Holy Spirit and prepare them to receive the sacrament of confirmation. Although sealing is central to the recommended catechetical texts¹²⁸ for this session, the bishop’s words are written, but not explained for candidates. The symbolic action for the session focuses on the imposition of hands, but the opportunity to demonstrate a seal and the imprint it makes in wax is missing. Neither the scripture readings nor subsequent discussions make any mention of what it means to ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’. There is no opportunity to look at the seal of confirmation as a mark of identity although it is stated that anointing with Chrism and the words of confirmation ‘symbolize and impart the fullness of the Holy Spirit’.¹²⁹ The absence of focus on an ‘indelible spiritual mark’¹³⁰ before and during the period of confirmation catechesis is particularly notable given that CCC 1304, which centres on it, is included as one of the key recommended texts for *Reflection 9*. It is feasible, therefore, that candidates may be confirmed without realizing that they are permanently spiritually marked as belong to God.

Authentication

In the Spirit has a ‘Diary of the Holy Spirit’ activity on the retreat day. This relates outpouring of the Holy Spirit loosely to authentication by including references to anointing with the Spirit, imposition of hands and Pentecost. Some references such as ‘Choose David

¹²⁵ Zanzig, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, p.208.

¹²⁶ Zanzig, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, p.301.

¹²⁷ Zanzig, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, p.321.

¹²⁸ The recommended background texts, CCC 1285-1289, 1293-1301, 1302-1305 are specific to confirmation and the effects of confirmation. These texts reflect in particular the catechetical themes of sealing, outpouring, identity and authentication.

¹²⁹ Zanzig, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, p.301.

¹³⁰ CCC 1304 quoting 2 Cor. 1:21-22; cf. Eph. 1:13-14.

as King¹³¹ relate anointing to authentication. It is conceivable that this understanding would underpin candidates' knowledge and understanding of what it means to 'be sealed' and to receive 'an indelible spiritual mark'¹³² had catechesis on 'sealing' been included. *Preparing to be Confirmed* touches on the theme of authentication by including reflections on the calls of Jeremiah¹³³ and of the disciples.¹³⁴ Because these stories are related to the author's own personal experiences their meaning is obscured. There is no reference to the baptism of Christ, except the introduction advises catechists that 'the Rite of Confirmation also expresses the link between baptism and confirmation by telling us it is desirable that the godparent at baptism should be the sponsor at confirmation'.¹³⁵

Gifted in the Spirit does not separate authentication from the effects of 'sealing' but implies it through explaining that, candidates will be 'marked' by God and will 'see the fruits of it'.¹³⁶ Baptism is mentioned as the first sacrament of initiation when candidates received a 'life of grace'¹³⁷ although the meaning is not discussed in the context of the baptism of Christ and his authentication by God.

Confirmed in the Faith cites Jesus reading from the book of Isaiah to relate authentication to the outpouring of the Spirit.¹³⁸ Candidates are taught that 'Jesus the Son of God' will strengthen them with 'his love and his Spirit' at confirmation.¹³⁹ They are taught that the same life giving Spirit that filled the apostles at Pentecost is given to them at baptism and confirmation. The Spirit will strengthen them and remain with them forever, which requires a response from them.

¹³¹ 1 Samuel 16:1-13 Gomez and Kings, *In the Spirit*, catechists' book p.44.

¹³² CCC 1304.

¹³³ Adapted from Jer. 1:4-10.

¹³⁴ Adapted from Mt. 4:18-22.

¹³⁵ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.9.

¹³⁶ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.38.

¹³⁷ Maryvale Institute *Gifted in the Spirit* p.39.

¹³⁸ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.4 quotes Luke 4:16-21.

¹³⁹ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.8.

Confirmation is the sacrament when the Holy Spirit comes down on us as he did on the apostles to make us ready for being a Christian in the world. It completes what began at baptism.¹⁴⁰

Emphasis on strengthening by the Holy Spirit and explanation that confirmation is just the beginning of their response to the Spirit's call demonstrates to candidates that confirmation includes authentication in the sense of being ratified for a mission as Jesus was at his baptism. Similarly authentication for the candidates own post confirmation mission is implied in the explanation that confirmation is 'our own personal Pentecost'.¹⁴¹

Welcome the Spirit addresses authentication by reference to anointing priests, prophets and kings to 'set [them] apart for service'.¹⁴² The story of Pentecost enables candidates to develop awareness of the power of the Spirit through an activity on the symbols of the Holy Spirit. There is an implied connection to authentication in the following activity which considers Peter's role and how he was strengthened by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴³ No connections are made to other areas of learning about the Spirit nor to the effects of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at confirmation.

We Celebrate Confirmation repeatedly describes confirmation as an 'affirmation of baptism'¹⁴⁴ with the renewal of baptismal promises. Candidates are taught that the imposition of hands recalls an ancient practice 'used when a person was dedicated to God for a particular purpose'.¹⁴⁵ Catechists are encouraged to develop this so that candidates can connect the imposition of hands to the authentication of their new Christian life that they receive at confirmation. Authentication is implied by anointing with reference 1 Samuel 16:1-13 and stories to illustrate how to witness to Jesus and how people have responded in faith to his call. The programme does not relate being 'sealed' to sharing in Christ's priesthood and there is no reference to the baptism of Christ.

¹⁴⁰ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.32.

¹⁴¹ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.14.

¹⁴² Potter and Bavidge *Welcome the Spirit*, p.80.

¹⁴³ Adapted from Acts 2.

¹⁴⁴ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, e.g. p.T12.

¹⁴⁵ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.17.

Authentication is implicit in *Confirmed in a Faithful Community* as the Spirit's activity empowers Christians to grow closer to Jesus and carry out his work in the Church, but it is not made explicit. The understanding of a 'sacramental moment' during the rite of confirmation also suggests the gift of the Spirit confers gifts and fruits for this purpose, but authentication is otherwise absent even in mention of the role of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism in *Formation 2* and *Reflection 4*.

Down-payment on salvation

In the Spirit makes no suggestion that confirmation is, in any way, related to a guarantee of God's promise of salvation, leaving the theme of down-payment unrepresented. There is no mention of sacraments and the section on 'Saviour' focuses on why Jesus died rather than resurrection.¹⁴⁶

Preparing to be Confirmed makes no connection between confirmation and a down-payment on salvation, nor indicates that the sacraments point to the future. It uses the example of the flowers the author gave to her grandmother to express that the sacraments are love in a visible form 'because the proof Christ gives us of his love is not turned into a loveless thing'.¹⁴⁷ It is difficult to discern the sense that the author is trying to convey and likely to confuse catechists and candidates.¹⁴⁸

Gifted in the Spirit implies the theme of down-payment in the explanation that God 'guarantees' that the gift of the Spirit and the promised seven gifts at confirmation are forever, although there is no mention of salvation or sense of the sacraments signifying the future kingdom.

¹⁴⁶ Gomez and Kings, *In the Spirit*, catechists' book p.34-35.

¹⁴⁷ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.37.

¹⁴⁸ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.37 Klein has cited Schillebeeckx, E. *Christ and the Encounter with God* London: Sheed and Ward, 1966 as her source. In this passage Schillebeeckx is writing about the humanity of Christ, but Klein has used it to express the sacramental divinity of Christ.

Confirmed in the Faith explains that Jesus shows us ‘the way to heaven’ and the seven sacraments confer ‘Jesus’ grace throughout our lives’.¹⁴⁹ Candidates learn that Jesus is present in each of the sacraments but there is no mention of a pledge or reference to the sacraments and the future kingdom.

Welcome the Spirit has no explicit connection to the theme of a down-payment on salvation. It describes the sacraments as ‘outward signs’ and ‘great symbolic actions’¹⁵⁰ through which it explains the actions of Chrismation and confirmation, but with no indication of sacraments as a sign of future glory.

We Celebrate Confirmation refers to sacraments of initiation as ‘visible signs of invisible grace or sacred reality that enable one to become a full member of the Body of Christ’¹⁵¹ which is difficult for catechists to explain and candidates to understand. There is no mention of confirmation being in any way linked to a down-payment on salvation. The sacraments of initiation are presented together as enabling the Christian community to grow closer to Jesus and each other.

Confirmed in a Faithful Community makes no direct connection between confirmation and a down-payment on salvation although a detailed background to the sacraments of initiation is provided for catechists. *Reflection 8* focuses on the sacraments of initiation for candidates. Through experiential pedagogy, it emphasizes how these sacraments are interrelated. Candidates are enabled to reflect on the Spirit’s activity in their lives:

As for the candidates, confirmation is a sacramental moment in which they, by freely opening their heart and mind to the creative power of the ever-present Spirit, not only deepen the Spirit’s activity in their own life, but also help to increase the Spirit’s limitless power within the church and the world.¹⁵²

The future coming of the kingdom is possibly implied with reference to the ‘Spirit’s limitless power’ but there is nothing to explain that connection to catechists or candidates.

¹⁴⁹ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.33.

¹⁵⁰ Potter and Bavidge *Welcome the Spirit*, p.79.

¹⁵¹ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.97.

¹⁵² Zanzig, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community*, p.253.

Post-confirmation mission with conformity to Christ

The extent to which the programmes speak of sharing Jesus' anointing and being conformed to him as priest, prophet and king to help to establish how far conformity to Christ is taught through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. An understanding of sharing in Christ's anointing is essential to understanding the meaning of 'seal' and 'character', and growing towards a theological understanding of what it means to become like Christ and be an adult member of the Church. It is being an adult member of the church that seems to pervade published confirmation preparation programmes with candidates making their own profession of faith seeming more important than understanding what it means to 'be sealed...'. Only two programmes mention of sharing in Jesus' anointing: *Gifted in the Spirit* explains the purpose of Chrism at baptism and confirmation by stating 'As Jesus was priest, prophet and king, we share in that anointing with him';¹⁵³ *We Celebrate Confirmation* explains that the Hebrew word for Messiah and the Greek word *Christos* means anointed one and anointing is a sign of becoming like Christ. It also explains that anointing is an ancient tradition in which priests and prophets anointed people to give them the strength of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁴ *Preparing to be Confirmed* tells candidates that they were called at baptism 'to share in work of Christ who came to us as priest, prophet and king.' There is no explanation of Jesus' anointing, priesthood, role as a prophet or kingship although he is described as 'our shepherd-king who guides us, encourages us, feeds us, heals us and strengthens us'.¹⁵⁵ Arguably, this describes the role of a priest, prophet or king, but it is difficult to discern how the candidates share in this role, as it appears to be a list of what Jesus will do for them. Neither *In the Spirit, Welcome the Spirit* nor *Confirmed in a Faithful Community* mentioned sharing in Jesus' priesthood, role as a prophet and kingship.

¹⁵³ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.42.

¹⁵⁴ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.18.

¹⁵⁵ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.38.

In the Spirit emphasizes post-confirmation mission through its experiential approach and content. Candidates are prepared to receive the sacrament of confirmation and, after some post-confirmation sessions, to participate in a rite of affirmation. During this rite, the newly confirmed young people make a public commitment to follow Jesus as adult members of the Church. The priest touches their ears and mouths and says ‘*Ephphatha*’.¹⁵⁶ Although this rite authenticates what has happened at confirmation, it is arguable that as confirmation can neither be repeated nor undone, placed after confirmation this rite detracts from what has already been achieved at confirmation. The rite is borrowed from the rite of infant baptism and in adult baptism can be part of the catechumenate. It therefore stands before confirmation. As a post-confirmation rite it potentially undermines confirmation as the Holy Spirit’s seal of authentication and the words ‘be opened’ could appear to contradict ‘be sealed’ unless the candidates understand that the seal of confirmation ‘perfects the common priesthood of the faithful received at baptism, and “the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and as it were officially (*quasi ex officio*)”’.¹⁵⁷ In essence, *In the Spirit* relates only to the catechetical theme of post-confirmation mission, with central focus on making a personal commitment to Jesus. Candidates are encouraged to consider their idea of ‘the ideal perfect person’¹⁵⁸ and then relate their ideal person to Jesus and invite him into their lives. Starting with the candidates’ own experience of friendship to enable them to consider Christ in their lives, the exercise encourages candidates to think of Jesus only in human terms, undermining his divinity. For example, the question ‘When Jesus died, what sort of funeral did he have?’¹⁵⁹ distorts the centrality of the resurrection and potentially denies Christ’s eternal oneness in the Trinity¹⁶⁰. This highlights a key catechetical deficiency and it is only to be concluded

¹⁵⁶ This rite has its origins in pre-baptismal rites in the early Church.

¹⁵⁷ CCC 1305 quotes St. Thomas Aquinas, ST III, 72,5, ad 2.

¹⁵⁸ Gomez and Kings, *In the Spirit*, candidates’ book p.16.

¹⁵⁹ Gomez and Kings, *In the Spirit*, candidates’ book p.16.

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter 1, fig. 2, p.47 cf. GDC 30.

that this programme does not prepare young people adequately to understand what it means to be 'sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'.

Preparing to be Confirmed addresses post-confirmation mission through an explanation that 'Jesus wants us to be like him and he confirms and strengthens what happens in our baptism in confirmation'.¹⁶¹ The programme contains a section on the gifts of the Spirit, with emphasis on helping candidates to identify the gifts in themselves and others in order to 'become like Jesus'.¹⁶² with the Holy Spirit as 'your helper and guide'.¹⁶³ That the programme concentrates on the humanity of Jesus without mention of his divinity demonstrates that post-confirmation mission is presented with little understanding of what it means to be conformed to Christ through the sacrament of confirmation. Exemplified through catechetical activities such as a reflection on meeting Jesus in the park, and candidates writing their own version of the creed. Jesus' humanity is further emphasized by the author's use of language such as 'person'.¹⁶⁴ and 'this man called Jesus'.¹⁶⁵ Whilst there is nothing wrong with a consideration of Jesus' humanity, it is not balanced by any references to his divinity. In the creed writing activity candidates are asked leading questions which encourage them to think of Jesus as just human, such as 'Did he know about computers when he was a baby in Nazareth?'.¹⁶⁶ The belief statements of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Apostles' Creed are printed but unexplained, with the candidates left to write their own statement of belief. *Preparing to be Confirmed* highlights the deficiency of too little emphasis on the divinity of Christ¹⁶⁷. Some of its teaching is counter-productive to understanding 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' because it encourages young people to adapt Christian teaching to meet their own requirements.

¹⁶¹ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.37.

¹⁶² Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.35.

¹⁶³ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.33.

¹⁶⁴ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.35.

¹⁶⁵ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.38.

¹⁶⁶ Klein, *Preparing to be confirmed*, p.57.

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter 1, table 2, p.47 cf. GDC 30.

Gifted in the Spirit integrates catechetical themes and teaches that candidates will receive the Holy Spirit in a way that will permanently change them. Most emphasis is on post-confirmation mission, and the least on a down-payment on salvation. All themes addressed are integrated into a single theme of what it will mean to receive the Holy Spirit at confirmation when the bishop says 'be sealed'. The programme focuses on factual information such as the virtues, the gifts and the fruits of the Spirit and how the candidates should use them in their post-confirmation lives.

Confirmed in the Faith integrates the theme of authentication with that of post-confirmation mission in the explanation of the gifts of the Spirit as 'special strengths'¹⁶⁸ which enable Christians to witness to Jesus. Post-confirmation mission is addressed from the outset:

When we are confirmed we take a great step towards Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁹

Exploring what that 'step' means as confirmation preparation and response to the Holy Spirit thereafter is central to the programme. It is explicit in texts from the New Testament in which candidates are encouraged to consider the apostles' mission and how their own lives in the Church are a form of apostleship. There is emphasis on what candidates can do to grow spiritually as confirmed adult members of the church, and there are exercises to help them relate gospel teachings to their lives. However there is little space for candidates to discuss *how* to do this in relation to the social dimension of their faith.

Welcome the Spirit emphasizes the theme of post-confirmation mission and expresses that the purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit is to enable Christians to witness to Christ. The activities on belonging enable candidates to see why the choice to be confirmed is ultimately the choice to witness to Christ and the investigation of qualities in Jesus enables candidates to conform to him. The section on signs and symbols includes the actions of

¹⁶⁸ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.13.

¹⁶⁹ Nash, *Confirmed in the Faith*, p.3.

Jesus described in each of the seven sacraments as a 'Jesus wants us...' All of these point towards conformity to Christ:

Jesus wants us to be like him. (Confirmation)¹⁷⁰

There is nothing further to link confirmation to consignation, seal, imprint or what it means to receive the sacramental 'character' of confirmation. Without an experienced catechist to enable them to join up the gems of relevant catechesis into a meaningful whole, young people have little chance of understanding what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' beyond following the will of Jesus. The usefulness of the words of Pope John Paul II in the introductory session remains largely untapped.

We Celebrate Confirmation addresses post-confirmation mission through the 'reflecting on life' (*Theme One*). Candidates are encouraged to think of confirmation as 'knowing that Jesus is with us in his Spirit every step of the way'¹⁷¹ although the focus on the candidates' own values is predominant. They encouraged to explore ways of making Pentecost present in their own lives, engendering a sense of mission. They are taught directly that confirmation will be 'just as real' as Pentecost in their own lives and 'the Holy Spirit will strengthen you to witness to Christ in the way you choose to live'.¹⁷² The beatitudes and gifts of the Spirit are applied to the candidates' post-confirmation lives in Christ. The theme of post-confirmation mission is addressed through scripture and community services without an understanding of receiving a character or being marked with a spiritual seal. Therefore opportunities to develop an understanding of what it means to be conformed to Christ are omitted. It is a notable feature of this programme that themes are often introduced with potential for the experienced catechist to make some purposeful connections between the presented subject knowledge and its application to the seal of the Spirit. These connections however are neither made nor implied within the programme, so

¹⁷⁰ Potter and Bavidge *Welcome the Spirit*, p.69.

¹⁷¹ Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.2.

¹⁷² Koplik and Brady, *We Celebrate Confirmation*, p.30.

there is no actual provision for candidates to understand the way in which they are ontologically changed when the bishop anoints them and says 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'.

Confirmed in a Faithful Community uses the story of Nicodemus (John 3:1-12) and allows candidates to consider more fully the gift of the Holy Spirit by linking confirmation to Jesus' invitation 'to be born of both water and the Spirit'. *Confirmed in a Faithful Community* sees the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as essential both to confirmation and the mission of the confirmed community. It emphasizes celebration of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit and explicit connection between the imposition of hands, renewal of baptismal vows and outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the rite of confirmation. It is made clear that the same Spirit who is present at confirmation was also active in the creation of the world, in the writing of the scriptures, the baptism of Jesus and at Pentecost. This central point to understanding the activity of the Spirit through the Church and the world is used as a closing point for a personal reflection in *Reflection 4*. The catechetical part of the programme does not focus on post-confirmation mission. Because it uses the RCIA model, post-confirmation issues including what it means to be conformed to Christ are addressed through one mystagogic session known as *Mission*. This session contains activities and discussions to enable the newly confirmed to reflect on what has happened and discover what it means to be fully initiated members of the body of Christ.

Discussion

It has already been identified that unsuitable resources are a key problem.¹⁷³ This survey suggests that we should be concerned about the lack of correlation between what the Church teaches and the catechetical provision for candidates in the published programmes. The most significant trend is that all programmes have a fair or thorough representation of the theme of post confirmation mission. This theme in itself is represented variously from

¹⁷³ Chapter 1.

connecting post-confirmation mission with conformity to Christ as priest, prophet and king, to emphasizing post-confirmation mission only, through participation in activities in the Church. The theme of a down-payment on salvation receives little or no representation in any of the programmes examined. Notably, the connection between confirmation and a down-payment on salvation is the least represented in confirmation sections of *The Catechism* and not mentioned explicitly in the current rite, although it is mentioned in the 'Rite for consecration of the Chrism'. An imbalance of themes within the published programmes was found to result in an overall imbalance of provision for confirmation catechesis. *Gifted in the Spirit* and *Confirmed in the Faith* are considerably closer to Church teaching as outlined in the rite of confirmation and *The Catechism* because of their representation of the full humanity and divinity of Christ, and the unity and coequality of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity.

However, that many programmes are lacking in key elements of the Church's teaching is evidenced if we are to refer once more to the key catechetical omissions outlined *Ad Hoc* Committee Review¹⁷⁴ and GDC 30. Consistent with GDC 30's statement that the link between catechesis and liturgy is 'weak and fragmentary' we have found consistent omissions in explaining the matter and form of confirmation leaving candidates uniformed about how the gift of the Spirit is conferred, how the sacraments of initiation relate to one another or indeed that sacraments have a role in pointing to their future salvation. We have a clear example here of two key deficiencies:¹⁷⁵ 'insufficient recognition of the transforming effects of grace' and 'inadequate presentation of the sacraments'. The predominance of post-confirmation mission and lack of teaching in all programmes about a down-payment on salvation evidences the 'inadequate presentation of eschatology'. Furthermore, we have seen 'insufficient attention to the Trinity' and 'insufficient emphasis

¹⁷⁴ *The Ten Catechetical Deficiencies* USCCB, 1997. <http://old.usccb.org/catechism/document/oralrpt.shtml>

See table. 2 p.47.

¹⁷⁵ USCCB, 1997.

on the divinity of Christ' in over-simplified presentations of the role of the Holy Spirit and lack of connection between Jesus and the Spirit. This is most apparent in *Preparing to be Confirmed* but by no means exclusive to it. The tendency amongst programmes to focus on the emotive approach, to encourage young people to consider confirmation from their own point of view, with activities such as rewriting the creed, is not only an example of 'insufficient evidence of God's initiative in the world, corresponding overemphasis on human action' but signifies a lack of understanding of Church teaching on the part of programme writers.

Willey, de Cointet and Morgan¹⁷⁶ ground their catechetical understanding in the Church's authority from Jesus Christ. This enables application of Church teaching as revealed in the *Catechism* to the spiritual lives of young people preparing for confirmation and outlines 'twelve keys' by which to gauge effective catechesis spiritually and practically. Many of the problems within confirmation catechesis that we have identified and key omissions found in published preparation materials are compensated by Willey, de Cointet and Morgan. Applications will be discussed at the end of this thesis in the light of Willey, de Cointet and Morgan's connections between catechetical pedagogy and the teaching of the Church.

Conclusion

The published programmes in contemporary use show a very different experience for candidates than those of the mid-twentieth century. Although there continues to be a central focus on how candidates should live their 'adult' Christian lives, the metaphor of 'soldier of Christ' has all but disappeared,¹⁷⁷ to be replaced by metaphors such as 'Jesus' team' and a greater emphasis on personal choice.

¹⁷⁶ Willey, P, De Cointet, P. and Morgan, B. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis* San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2008.

¹⁷⁷ Participation in 'the Church's fight against sin' is cited in Programme 5's use of the words of Pope John Paul II, but not developed. Potter and Bavidge *Welcome the Spirit*, p.80-81.

The results of this survey indicate that contemporary confirmation preparation programmes focus predominantly on the young peoples' secular experience to enable them to participate more fully in their life in the Christian community. Despite little connection to being conformed to Christ as priest, prophet and king through anointing, the programmes encourage young people to think about Jesus and to enter into a relationship with him. The nature of this relationship varies from programme to programme from a prayerful understanding of Jesus in the sacraments, such as *Confirmed in the Faith*, to a redefining of Jesus on the candidates' own human terms, such as *In the Spirit* and *Preparing to be Confirmed*. Omissions identified in the published programmes in this survey correlate to those identified by the *Ad Hoc* Committee and GDC 30. These omissions also indicate that understanding what it means to be conformed to Christ through the sacraments requires a catechetical pedagogy which shows both 'theological' content and 'emotive' pastoral understanding and this requires fully trained catechists. The survey programmes do little to prepare candidates to embrace the ontological change that the Church teaches takes place when they are indelibly marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit at confirmation. They all contain some workable, practical ideas which might entertain or bond young people into a sense of community at least for the catechetical period. However, most programmes fall short, or very short of catechetical content. If the catechists do not understand fully the content of Church teaching on confirmation, perhaps because they were brought up to be 'soldiers of Christ' with little or no catechesis on sealing, there is little chance that they will be able to make the necessary connections between implied ideas and the catechetical themes that underpin the meaning of the sacrament of confirmation. It would appear that the change in the bishop's words in the 'Rite of Confirmation' is thoroughly backed up by the explanation of the 'seal' or 'character' of confirmation in the homily for the 'Rite of Confirmation' and the *Catechism*, but that this has not been transmitted thoroughly in appropriate changes in the provision of catechetical material.

We conclude that the content of many contemporary published confirmation programmes does little to prepare candidates to understand what it means to be 'sealed' with the Spirit at confirmation and that these programmes are ambivalent towards the full riches of Church teaching as represented in the rite of confirmation or *The Catechism*.

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORICAL AND SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND OF 'THE SEAL OF THE SPIRIT'

The research of the previous chapter indicates that there is probably a gap in confirmation catechesis, and that at least some young people are not told what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' in published confirmation preparation programmes. The present thesis argues that the 'seal of the Spirit' is a largely untapped catechetical resource which has the potential to enable young people to understand more fully what it means to be indelibly marked by the Holy Spirit, authenticated as belonging to God, conformed to Christ and anointed with the Spirit as a pledge of their future salvation. This chapter begins the examination of the sacramental seal by seeing how the concept of 'seal' has evolved through scripture and secular use, to find its place in the consciousness of New Testament and early Christian writers. It is likely that the word 'seal' represents more than one concept, so that a network of meanings may emerge to elucidate the different ways in which the relevant terms would have been understood by Christian times. The following two chapters will concentrate on the meaning of the seal in the New Testament itself. New Testament terms related to sealing are referred to during this chapter to keep in mind the purpose of elucidating the meaning of sealing in Christian initiation and its value as a catechetical resource. Its usefulness to the four themes of sealing is adumbrated in the background of the teaching of the New Testament.

Martos draws attention to the Greek philosophical thinking behind the New Testament teaching on sealing. He states that by returning to the Greek philosophers one can better

understand the Christian mysteries and cites the ‘sacramental seal’ as an example.¹ Martos reasons that it is ‘philosophical theories that pulled revelation and experience, belief and practice, together into a coherent picture for the Fathers and for later ages as well’.² But if there was philosophical thinking about the seal what was it? Woodcock cites Philo to illustrate the term ‘seal’ used to designate mental ‘impressions’.³ This use of the term contributes to the range of meanings of ‘seal’ and reminds us of the phrase ‘such and such made an impression on me.’ If catechists are asked, ‘How does the Spirit “make an impression” on my soul when he seals me?’ they can reply that we can naturally speak of other things making impressions on us.

Origins and Definitions of the terms Σφραγίς and Σφραγίζω

The evolution of the concept of ‘sealing’ is examined through the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω in the Septuagint with reference to its early Hebrew usage which underpins the New Testament. Uses of ‘seal’ are established, and related meanings are explored. The relation to concepts surrounding the terms εικὼν,⁴ χαρακτήρ,⁵ and σημεῖον⁶ is investigated. The association with ἀπαβών⁷ is considered and the term δακτυλῖον⁸ is considered where its use in the Septuagint specifically means a seal-ring.

Both literal and metaphorical uses are attested for the verb σφραγίζω ‘to seal, stamp with a seal’.⁹ The verb reflects the breadth of meaning of the noun σφραγίς. The Patristic Greek

¹ Martos, J. *Doors to the Sacred: A historical introduction to the sacraments of the Catholic Church* USA: Ligouri/Triumph 2001 p.32.

² Martos, J. *Doors to the Sacred* p.33.

³ Woodcock, Eldon. ‘The Seal of the Holy Spirit’ *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155, (April-June 1998) p.139 -163.

⁴ image/likeness.

⁵ imprint.

⁶ sign.

⁷ pledge, guarantee.

⁸ ring.

⁹ Moulton, (ed.) Harold K. (ed.) *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, USA: Regency Reference Library (Zondervan Publishing House) 1978.

lexicon edited by Lampe¹⁰ says σφραγίζω means to ‘set as a seal’, ‘fasten’ ‘seal down’ and ‘seal up’ with scriptural references to which we shall refer during this and the following chapter. Arndt and Gingrich¹¹ refer to sealing for closure (Daniel 6:18 and Matthew 27:66); keeping secret, identification and attestation. Moulton¹² says σφραγίζω can mean to close, to hide, or to mark for identification or impress with a distinguishing mark or image, to ratify or pass over officially. Abbott-Smith¹³ cites the ‘seal on sin’ (Dan.9:24) , and ‘seal up my crime in a bag’ (Job 14:17) both of which suggest concealing by ending, and hiding, by keeping secret.

Literary use of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω can be traced to the sixth century B.C. as action, object and metaphor.¹⁴ Its oral use, however, was probably centuries earlier as exemplified by seals found at Knossos. The words σφραγίς and σφραγίζω represent an older practice which had become part of common culture. Early examples of the written use of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω coincide approximately with Cyrus’s rise to empire and the subsequent merging of Greek and Near Eastern interests and helps to explain how the Greek terms emerged for a practice rooted separately in Near Eastern and Minoan culture. According to Arndt and Gingrich, the noun σφραγίς means the sealing tool itself such as a signet ring, the inscription (image) inscribed on it and the imprint¹⁵ left by the seal. Lampe¹⁶ says σφραγίς is like the Eucharistic body of Christ, ‘from which many impressions are taken’ whilst it remains unchanged. Woodcock

¹⁰ Lampe, G.H.W. (ed.) *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961 – 1968 p.1354.

¹¹ Arndt, W.F. and Gingrich, F.W. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1957.

¹² ‘to seal, stamp with a seal, Mt. 27:66; to seal up, close up, conceal, Rev.10:4; 22:10; to set a mark upon, distinguish by a mark, Rev. 7:3,8; to seal, to mark distinctively as invested with a certain character, Jn. 6:27; to set one’s own mark upon, to impress with a mark of acceptance, 2 Cor. 1:22; obtain a quittance of, to deliver over safely to anyone, Rom.15:28; to set one’s seal, make a solemn declaration, Jn. 3:33; Moulton, (ed.) *Analytical Greek Lexicon*.

¹³ Abbott-Smith, G. *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, Edinburgh: T.&T.Clark Ltd. 3rd Edn. 1995 p.435-436.

¹⁴ Schippers, R. ‘Seal’ in Brown, C. (ed.) *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, USA: Zondervan 1978.

¹⁵ Χαρακτήρ is also translated as ‘imprint’.

¹⁶ Lampe, *Patristic Lexicon*, p.1355.

refers to the Platonic use of the image, for the ideal form, by stating that ‘even when it is used to make copies, a seal remains unchanged’.¹⁷ Furthermore, figurative use of the noun σφραγίς extends the meaning to a symbol of proof or guarantee.¹⁸ All this immediately suggests the close relation between the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω, and εικόν ‘image’ or ‘likeness’; χαρακτήρ ‘impress’ or ‘stamp’ and ἀρραβών ‘pledge’ or ‘down-payment’.¹⁹ Thus there is a relationship between the ‘seal’, the mark it makes and the purpose of that marking; three themes which shall remain central to this analysis of the use of the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω in everyday life and in scriptural texts.

The Meaning of the Terms Σφραγίς and Σφραγίζω supported by Historical Evidence and illustrated by its use in Secular and Pre-Christian Religious Rites

In colloquial Greek²⁰, the word σφραγίς denoted both the stamp and the imprint.²¹ In ancient times, wealthy and influential people would have had their own seal to stamp official documents, ratifying their contents. This background, discussed in detail by Lampe, has given rise to a concept of σφραγίς popular amongst twentieth century writers, many of whom have used Lampe as source material. By looking at historical and archaeological evidence of ‘sealing’ we can verify and expand Lampe’s definitions to allow for the breadth of meaning of terms relating to sealing. Lampe also considers Christian authors’ specific use of *signaculum* as a translation of the biblical σφραγίς by his own use of *signaculum* in preference to *signum*.

¹⁷ Woodcock, E. ‘The Seal of the Holy Spirit’, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (April – June 1998), p.140.

¹⁸ ‘A token, proof I Cor. 9:2; a token of guarantee Rom. 4:11’ Moulton, Harold K. (Ed.) 1978.

¹⁹ Definitions from Mundle, W. ‘Image, Imprint’ and Becker, O. ‘Pledge’ in Brown (ed) *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.

²⁰ When scripture was translated from its original Hebrew and Aramaic to Greek, many known colloquial terms were apportioned new meanings to encompass theological meaning. It is unlikely that terms relating to σφραγίς were understood as theological term prior to the Septuagint.

²¹ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1951 p.8.

Σφραγίς (*signaculum*) is used to denote a stone in a signet ring, the design or inscription which it bears, the stamp which is made with it upon wax, and hence a seal which is an authentication, guarantee or proof; it signifies a token of agreement or affirmation, a mark of ownership, a seal set upon a letter, parcel or book, or other object as a mark of ownership, and also a safeguard or protection against interference.²²

Lampe's broad interpretation of σφραγίς, as a noun, suggests a seal of documents, both in the literal sense and as a symbol of protection. His explanation of the term σφραγιζειν, 'to seal', suggests a wider interpretation of perfecting. Lampe sets a context of sealing documents, authentication and identifying ownership:

Σφραγιζειν (*signare*) means, among other things, to set a seal upon a document, and thus to give it authority, to ratify, affirm, attest, seal up or shut, fix in, assign limits, or bounds to something; to put a seal upon, in the sense of complete or make perfect; to set a mark of ownership upon something, stamp or brand it.²³

As historical and scriptural evidence for the use of seals for identification, authentication and possession pre-dates the suggested earliest written use of the Greek term σφραγίς during the sixth century B.C.,²⁴ we must be aware of the historical influences which led to the terms σφραγίς and σφραγιζω being incorporated into scripture. References made to the Near Eastern secular practice of sealing before 500 B.C. and the early Old Testament period from 1000 to 500B.C. suggest that many religious and secular practices involving sealing were established by the time of Cyrus's rise to power in c.550 B.C. Other pre-Christian references such as those made by the historian Herodotus (c.490 -425 B.C.) are noted for their contribution to the historical background of σφραγίς and σφραγιζω.²⁵ The Septuagint provides a Greek translation of Hebrew terms. The manner in which concepts of σφραγίς and σφραγιζω became subsumed into Jewish practice, or at least Jewish awareness, contributes significantly to how the concept of 'seal' was present in the consciousness of New Testament writers.

²² Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.8.

²³ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.8.

²⁴ Schippers, *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.

²⁵ For example Herodotus 1:195; 2:38,113; 3:145; 7:233 <http://herodotuswebsite.co.uk> . This source has been cross checked against Butterfield, B.J. (ed) 'The Persian Wars by Herodotus' Rawlinson, G (trans) 1942, http://www.parstimes.com/history/herodotus/persian_wars/euterpe.html .

Archaeological Evidence up to the Fifth Century B.C.

The earliest evidence of seals includes archaeological remains from the ancient Near East which suggests that decorated seals were used as early as the fifth millennium B.C.²⁶ Stone seals, used to make impressions on soft clay tablets, served primarily as a mark of ownership. Albenda views these early seals and their impressions as 'not simply stamps showing ownership: they are a window into the social, political and religious world of ancient man.'²⁷ She justifies her argument by detailing the importance attached to some seals which were passed down through families and probably thought of as being able to protect the owner as well as to identify possessions. Their significance is emphasized by the evidence that seals were often cut into semi-precious stones such as agates, hematite and jasper, and engraved with detailed images. That these images were often of royalty or deities may also account for their perceived prophylactic power as well as indicating that seals were often the property of the privileged. Levy also attests to the view that early seals in Canaan were used to denote ownership or for protection and that cylinder seals were owned by the 'social elite'. He points to the Egyptian origin of scarab seals which influenced the 'Syrian style' of the second millennium B.C.²⁸ Examples of scenes of kings and gods have been discovered on late Assyrian cylinder seals. Their impressions on clay bullae were often used as a signature on a royal document, for example the Assyrian king, Esarhaddon (679-669 B.C.). This contract, marked with three dynastic seals (c. 1800 -6 B.C.), shows how seals were guarded and passed down over generations. These seals indicate that the seal bearers accepted a need for divine protection.

²⁶ Pauline Albenda suggests that clay seals were used in the Near East from the fifth to first millennium B.C. and that this innovation was 'parallel' to the emergence of cuneiform script on clay tablets, discovered in Mesopotamia, dated to c. 3,000 B.C. Albenda, P. 'Of Gods, Men and Monsters on Assyrian Seals' *Biblical Archaeologist* 41, (Mar. 1978) p.17-22.

²⁷ Albenda, P. 'Of Gods, Men and Monsters' p.17.

²⁸ Levy, T.E. *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* London: Leicester University Press 1995.

Early seals with pre-Phoenician inscriptions found at Knossos evidence sealing, probably to identify goods, in Bronze Age Minoan culture. The script on these seals²⁹ is widely accepted to reveal the rudiments of pre-alphabetic Greek written language, suggesting that there was a practice of sealing in Ancient Greece established before 1000 B.C.³⁰

Similarities in the Ancient Greek and Near Eastern practices of sealing at the time of Cyrus suggest that the Hellenistic period would have been characterised by the merging of two cultures, both with their roots in early established civilizations. The Ancient Greeks, who were largely influenced by the Egyptians, conducted trade with the Mesopotamian Near East. Agreements were ratified through the use of seals. If so, the background to σφραγίς and σφραγίζω is neither uniquely Greek, nor uniquely Near Eastern. We can conclude that there were ancient traditions of sealing in both the Near East and Greece before the fifth century B.C. which would have influenced the practices represented by the Greek terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω by the time it was recorded by Herodotus, during the fifth century B.C.

Archaeological and Historical Evidence from the Fifth Century B.C. to 1 A.D.

The use of signet rings to make soft clay impressions is shown by Herodotus to be established practice in religious ritual such as priests stamping their seal on beasts found to be ritually clean and designated for sacrifice.³¹

Hellenistic practice from Greece integrated with the traditions of Persian Palestine is evidenced in archaeological finds of private and official seals and seal impressions from the end of the fifth century B.C. Seals and seal impressions found in Palestine show the characteristics of private seals from Babylonia, Persia, Egypt and Greece, providing evidence

²⁹ This script is now known as Linear A and Linear B.

³⁰ The earliest seals found at Knossos pre-date the destruction of the palace in 1370 BC.

³¹ Herodotus 2:38 <http://herodotuswebsite.co.uk/> also in http://www.parstimes.com/history/herodotus/persian_wars/euterpe.html .

that local practice of seal ownership extended to outlying areas; the use of seals in trade suggests communication in both directions. Oval seals found in Palestine from the fifth to fourth centuries B.C. imitate the shape of Greek seals during the Hellenistic period, revealing the influence of an ancient Greek practice of sealing with independent origins from the practice in the ancient Near East.³² Cultural integration of 'sealing' is evidenced in changes from the fifth to the fourth century B.C. Seal motifs of lion images, typical of ancient Mesopotamia before the fifth century B.C., began to be replaced by oval shaped seals depicting motifs of owls or Greek gods, which had been established practice in ancient Greece.³³

With reference to North-West Semitic seals of the fifth century B.C. Lemaire³⁴ points out that an individual might possess several seals: some inherited and engraved with the names of his forefathers and some to denote his profession or official title. Lemaire's examples suggest posts of high rank and priestly function.³⁵ They indicate that those in possession of seals were probably significant public figures. In contrast, Herodotus suggests that ownership of a seal was commonplace:

Everyone carries a seal and a walking stick, carved at the top into the form of an apple, a rose, a lily, an eagle or something similar.³⁶

Herodotus suggests that the Greek practice of sealing, if once exclusive, had become accessible to ordinary people, but slaves, peasants and women were excluded from Herodotus' 'everyone'. The practice of having a seal, whether as a prophylactic, a mark of ownership or identification, was, nonetheless, a familiar part of Greek everyday life by the fifth century

³² For example the seals found at Knossos.

³³ Davies, W.D. and Finkelstein, L. (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. 1 Introduction The Persian Period*, Cambridge University Press, 1984.

³⁴ Lemaire, A. 'Recherches Actuelles sur les Sceaux Nord-Ouest Semitiques' *Vetus Testamentum* XXXVIII, 2, (Apr. 1988) p.220-230.

³⁵ Examples given include 'responsable du palais' 'servituer du roi' and 'prêtre' Lemaire, 'Recherches sur les Sceaux', p.221.

³⁶ Cited in Woodcock, 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit' , p.140; quoted from Herodotus 1:195.
<http://herodotuswebsite.co.uk/> also in http://www.parstimes.com/history/herodotus/persian_wars/clio.html.

B.C. Woodcock suggests that personal seals may have depicted the owner's chosen god as a mark of protection and that the form of seal was a mark on the bearer's body:

Some expressed their commitment to and possession by their god by bearing on their bodies the distinctive mark of a seal representing the god.³⁷

Woodcock cites Euripedes, Sophocles and Herodotus³⁸ as sources for his claim, suggesting that the practice he describes was known in Greece from the fifth to fourth centuries B.C.

Branding and tattooing, forbidden under Jewish law, were well known to the Greeks.

Although not practised in this way by Jews, the concept of 'sealing' as a mark would certainly have been absorbed into Jewish understanding for example under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes.³⁹ Herodotus describes runaway slaves visiting the shrine of Hercules to receive 'certain sacred marks' which protected them from their former masters' retribution showing sealing as a bodily mark of protection.⁴⁰ Bodily marking of military recruits with a seal or brand, however, implied possession and therefore made escape more difficult. Goltzen⁴¹ connects branding cattle to the 'sealing' of soldiers and slaves with the mark of their masters. He uses this example to explain the religious use of χαρακτήρ as an imprint of the believer's service to his lord.

Evidence of Greek practice before the Hellenic Period in Palestine from 323 to 63 B.C. reveals how Greek understanding of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω which would have been integrated into Hebrew thought with Hellenisation. The concept of 'sealing' as an imprint is rooted in ancient Greek and Near Eastern traditions of 'sealing' for identity and ownership. The evidence considered so far, outside the Pentateuch, suggests that concepts and uses of 'sealing' in the last millennium B.C. were widely associated with personal identity, possession of goods and a

³⁷ Woodcock, 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit' , p.146.

³⁸ 'Herodotus 2:113; cf. Shippers *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* 'seal' 3:497' cited by Woodcock, 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit' p.146.

³⁹ For example enforced branding – 'forced to wear ivy leaves' 2 Macc.6:7.

⁴⁰ Herodotus 2:113 <http://herodotuswebsite.co.uk/> ; http://www.parstimes.com/history/herodotus/persian_wars/euterpe.html .

⁴¹ Goltzen, H. 'Inchoatio et Perfectio Initiationis Christianae' *Studia Liturgica* 3 (1964) p. 2 – 19.

rudimentary form of ratifying agreements. Ownership is not only marked, but authenticated by the use of a seal. Furthermore, Albenda's⁴² identification of the use of seals as a prophylactic against evil suggests a pagan conceptual background to understanding the 'seal' as a pledge of divine protection and promise of salvation. Whilst Albenda's evidence is pagan, with the seal believed to protect the bearer from death in battle or the wrath of the gods, the early roots of human thinking about the need for divine protection are clearly present.

Σφραγίς in Scripture

The Pentateuch (Torah)

Σφραγίζω occurs only once and σφραγίς seven times in the Greek Pentateuch, whereas the term δακτυλιος, a seal ring, occurs twenty eight times. Δακτυλιος specifies the instrument that seals for the purpose of authentication. The association of 'sealing' with authentication (Jn. 6:37) can be identified in these early concepts of what it meant to possess a seal or receive an imprint; this is the basis of the understanding of sealing that would have influenced New Testament writers. An investigation of terms relating to 'sealing' used in the Pentateuch provides the historical and theological setting for the evolutionary journey of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω.

The reference to Judah's seal, cord and staff and Tamar's request that Judah should give his seal as a pledge on the goat he had promised (Gen. 38:18) provides an early example of the relationship between σφραγίς (signet ring) and αρραβών. The term for 'pledge' used in the Septuagint is αρραβών, although the term for 'seal' or 'signet' in the Septuagint is δακτυλιος. This reinforces the synonymous use of 'signet' and 'seal' suggested within translation of the term σφραγίς. Judah's seal would have been strung onto his staff, as a mark of personal

⁴² Albenda, P. 'Of Gods, Men and Monsters' p.17-22.

identification. Similarities to a mark of authority on a seal ring, are evident, except it is the possession of a leader of a tribe rather than a king or figure of notable military significance.

Thus, Tamar's possession of this seal would guarantee Judah's return with the promised goat. This early reference to the seal and staff had probably become commonplace by the time of Herodotus, and is a first glimpse of the relationship between σφραγίς and ἀρραβών. later developed in the context of early Christian theology by Paul (Eph.1:14). In Judah's pledge of a goat we see that the conceptual roots of the association between σφραγίς and ἀρραβών lie deep in the traditions and practice of ancient Israel. These would have been well integrated into the Christian tradition by the time σφραγίς and ἀρραβών became an image to explain a down-payment on God's promise of the future kingdom. Tamar's seal provides a lucid illustration of how the terms σφραγίς and ἀρραβών, as the authentication of a pledge amongst ordinary people, might have found their way into Pauline thought. However, it is not unique. Arguably this concept is present in Cain's mark (Gen. 4:15) and the lamb's blood at Passover (Ex. 12:13) because both feature a 'mark' of protection. Cain was marked by YHWH as a sign of YHWH's pledge to protect him from being killed (Gen. 4:15). The sense of Cain's 'mark' suggests a bodily mark such as that described by Herodotus.⁴³ Cain is marked to show that he should not be killed even though he is the one who has killed. God freely gives the 'seal' of protection. This reference to protection also suggests possession and describes a theme which evolves throughout scripture: σφραγίς is associated with σημεῖον as a sign or mark of possession by YHWH.⁴⁴ Exodus 12:13 speaks of the lamb's blood as a σημεῖον, not a seal, nevertheless it is a mark of distinction and protection, and may have been part of the background of the imagery in Revelation where the saved have washed their garments in the lamb's blood and have God's name and seal on their foreheads. Arguably this brings together

⁴³ Herodotus 7.233.

⁴⁴ For example Gen. 4:15; 17:11; Ex. 12:13; Deut. 6:8-9.

baptism, Jesus as the new Passover, themes of distinction, protection and a pledge of salvation, and the concepts of σημειον and σφραγίς, two words which are brought together in Romans 4:11.

The effect of receiving a 'seal' is more clearly depicted by the language of δακτυλιος ('seal-ring') and authorisation. Neither the term nor the act of 'sealing' is cited with reference to Pharaoh's ring. Joseph receiving Pharaoh's ring symbolised Pharaoh bestowing his royal seal upon him so that Joseph was authorized to carry out his work. That the seal is accompanied by a fine robe and necklace verifies its significance in this royal commission and marks Joseph's change of status:

και περιελομενος φαραω τον δακτυλιον απο της χειρος αυτου περιεθηκεν αυτον επι την χειρα Ιωσηφ και ενεδυσεν αυτον στολην βυσσινην και περιεθηκεν κλοιον χρυσου περι τον τραχηλον αυτου⁴⁵

Use of a sealing ring for authentication would have been known to the ancient Israelites of the second millennium B.C., and is evidenced in the archaeological findings of the Bronze Age Near East. Δακτυλιος as the sealing ring itself, the mark it made and the authority it represented, αρραβών, the pledge and σημειον, the sign, all contribute to the network of meanings attached to 'sealing' inherited by New Testament writers and the Church Fathers, and later used to describe the sacramental seal.

The literal uses and effects of 'sealing' described above illustrate how it came to be understood in a metaphorical sense in conjunction with physical practice, and helps identify how concepts of 'sealing' came to be associated with circumcision into the covenant of God. Although 'seal' is not used for circumcision in the Pentateuch, the theme of a symbolic bodily mark of identification and possession is exemplified not least in the circumcision of Abraham and subsequent covenant relationship between YHWH and the people of Israel. Although

⁴⁵ Gen. 41:42 LXX And Pharaoh took off his ring and put it on the hand of Joseph and put on him a robe of fine linen and put a necklace of gold about his neck.

equation of the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω with circumcision is a later development,⁴⁶ use of the term σημειον διαθήκης for ‘sign of the covenant’ (Gen.17:11) between YHWH and his people denotes the concept of an agreement ratified by a physical mark.

The most holy Jewish prayer, the *Shema*,⁴⁷ contains an example of σημειον used to represent the seal of the covenant⁴⁸:

και αφαισεις αυτα εις σημειον επι της χειρος σου και εσται ασαλευτον προ οφθαλμων σου και γραψετε αυτα επι τας φλιας των οικιων υμων και των πυλων υμων⁴⁹

Σημειον and σφραγίς both depict a mark of God’s protection because the image of inscribing words and teaching them to children suggests the permanence of inscribing words on minds. This connection would have been subsumed into Jewish thought through frequently repeated prayer. Furthermore, by the centrality of repeated prayer to the social and religious identity of the time, this suggests equivalence between the seal of the covenant and the ‘imprint’ of the covenant on humanity.

Abraham’s circumcision is described as both ‘covenant’ and σημειον ‘the sign of the covenant’ (Gen.17:10-11). It can be understood as σφραγίς (physical mark) which is not synonymous with the χαρακτηρ (imprint) of the covenant described by the *Shema*. Here we see an example of how different terms relating to ‘sealing’ contribute different shades of a complex meaning. There may be many instances in later theology of ‘sealing’ in the New Testament and Christian liturgy where synonymy between χαρακτηρ and σφραγίς appears as the result of changing contexts and Christianisation, but in early Judaism it is important to

⁴⁶ E.g. Rom. 4:11 ‘σημειον’ and ‘σφραγίς’ are used to describe circumcision as a sign and seal of righteousness in the Greek New Testament. Circumcision is discussed fully in Chapter 4.

⁴⁷ The complete *Shema* contains three pieces of scripture: *Shema* Deut. 6:4-9; *Vehayah* Deut.11:13-21; *Vaiyomer* Num. 15:37-41 located in http://www.hebrew4christians.net/Scripture/Torah/The_Shema/the_shema.html.

⁴⁸ This mark of the covenant exists today in the Jewish practice of keeping the text of the *Shema* in a mezuzah attached to the doorways of homes and synagogues, and the orthodox Jewish practice of wearing tefillin containing the *Shema* for prayer.

⁴⁹ Deut. 6:8-9 And thou shalt fasten them for a sign upon thy hand, and it shall be immovable before thine eyes. And ye shall write them on the lintels of your houses and of your gates.

consider individual terms relating to sealing on their own merits in order to understand fully the theology of ‘sealing’ that would have been available in particular to Jewish converts to Christianity during the first century AD. Circumcision suggests meanings of identity on a deeper, spiritual level than ‘sealing’ to identify ownership of material possessions.

Other uses of σφραγίς in the Pentateuch serve to describe the high priest’s vestments (Ex.28:11,21,6,36; 36:13,39). The term σφραγίς is used in the context of an engraving, or imprint, such as the earliest clay bullae seals of Mesopotamia from the third millennium B.C. The ‘seal - engraving’ (Ex. 28:11) of Aaron’s ephod is first described in literal terms, and subsequently as a simile ‘like seals’ (Ex.28:21; 39:14) or ‘like an engraved seal’ (Ex.39:6) in reference to the engravings of the names of the sons of Israel. This suggests that using names of tribes or lineage on seals emanated from the Mesopotamian practice of passing seals through families as heirlooms, but had now come to mean that a seal represented a sign of possession by YHWH ‘...as you would engrave a seal, you will engrave “consecrated to Yahweh”.’ (Ex. 28:36).

The Prophets and Writings

Scriptural evidence of ‘sealing’ as an ineradicable imprint to ratify documents includes both practical and figurative uses of ‘sealing’.

The terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω are used in the Septuagint version of the Former Prophets and the Hagiographa to describe the authentication of documents (1 Kg.20:8 LXX; 1Kg. 21:8; Neh. 9:38; 10:1; Est. 8:8,10) as well as a seal-ring representing authority (Est.3:10). The Septuagint uses the terms ἐσφραγίσατο (sealed) and σφραγίς (a seal) in a way that clearly distinguishes sealing from engraving or writing for which the term ἐγραψεν (wrote) is used.

Jezebel wrote the scroll 'in Ahab's name and sealed it with his seal' (1 Kg. 20:8) ⁵⁰ which shows sealing used to ratify something already written or engraved. Ratification is among the oldest known purposes of sealing. The significance and permanence attached to sealing are emphasised in particular in the late Book of Esther with reference to the king's signet setting out the law:

Γραψατε και υμεις εκ του ονοματος μου ως δοκει υμιν και σφραγισατε τω δακτυλιω μου οσα γαρ γραφεται του βασιλεως επιταξαντος και σφραγισθη τω δακτυλιω μου ουκ εστιν αυτοις αντειπειν⁵¹

Sealing as an image for closure and concealment appears in Isaiah (Isa. 29:11). This apocalyptic text anticipates the style of Daniel and Revelation. As part of the 'Little Apocalypse', it is unlikely that this passage was written by the 'first Isaiah'. However it is probable that Isaiah 8:16 (Bind up the testimony, seal the instruction in the heart of my disciples) was written by the 'first Isaiah' which demonstrates that apocalyptic sealing for closure probably developed from earlier Old Testament roots. The reference to sealing is a likely addition to clarify the preceding two verses.

Και εσονται υμιν παντα τα ρήματα ταυτα ως οί λόγοι του βιβλίου του εσφραγισμένου τουτου ο εαν δωσιν αυτο ανθρωπω επισταμενω γραμματα λέγοντες αναγνωθι ταυτα και ερει ου δυναμαι αναγνωναι εσφραγισται γαρ.⁵²

The simile of a sealed book referring to sealing for closure and concealment is clear from the Septuagint's use of σφραγιζω to depict the sealed book described the end of the same verse: ού δύναμαι αναγνωναι εσφραγισται γαρ (not able to read it because it is sealed). The suggestion of guarding or preservation adds the meaning that the reality behind the imagery

⁵⁰ LXX; 1 Kg.21:8 The Ahab passage may have been written by Deuteronomists, possibly before the references to sealing as engraving in Exodus.

⁵¹ Est. 8:8 Write ye also in my name, as it seems good to you, and seal it with my ring: for whatever orders are written at the command of the king, and sealed with my ring, it is not lawful to gainsay them.

⁵² Isa. 29:11 LXX And all these things shall be to you as the words of this sealed book which if they are given to a learned man saying 'Read this' he shall then say 'I cannot read it for it is sealed'.

may not be permanent. Isaiah's message of Yahweh's forgiveness is consistent with the same idea of waiting for a given time.⁵³

Jeremiah refers to sealing to ratify a document for the purchase of a field (Jer.39:10, 11, 25, 44 LXX; Jer.32:10, 44). Jeremiah's field symbolises hope for return after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. which adds a metaphorical dimension of sealing as a sign or token for the future.

Jeremiah also refers to the use of a signet ring as a mark of authority by denouncing Jehoiakim as a discarded signet ring (Jer.22:24).

Whilst the final editing of the book of Jeremiah is attributed to the Deuteronomists, Ezekiel's work may be associated with the Priestly tradition. Although it is likely that Ezekiel stayed in Palestine until the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., the latter part of his ministry was among the exiles in Babylon. Ezekiel's reference to 'sealing' in the context of the fall of Tyre, is historically significant as, during the sixth century B.C., Tyre was a centre of commerce, where the practice of using seals for business would have been well known. Ezekiel uses 'seal' figuratively in a tirade against the King of Tyre:

υιε ανθρωπου λαβε θρηνον επι τον αρχοντα Τυρου και ειπον αυτω ταδε λεγει Κυριος
Κυριος συ αποσφραγισμα ομοιωσεως και στεφανος καλλους⁵⁴

The Septuagint's use of the term ἀποσφραγισμα refers to 'sealing the model' and accounts for the English translation 'You were the signet of perfection' (Ezek. 28:12 RSV). The concept of σφραγίς is figurative: sealing for completion or fulfilment. The main significance of this reference to sealing is that it exemplifies a sophisticated, figurative use of σφραγίζω, to fulfil or perfect. Σφραγίζω in the context of the 'signet' refers to the use of sealing to close, later developed in the book of Daniel (Dan. 9:4). Thus the 'signet of perfection' is completed.

⁵³ Eg. Isa. 30:18

⁵⁴ Ezek. 28:12 LXX Son of Man, take up a lamentation for the prince of Tyre and say to him 'thus saith the Lord God; thou art a seal of resemblance and a crown of beauty.'

Whilst the purchase of Jeremiah's field demonstrates authentication by the literal use of σφραγίς, it also anticipates protection by symbolizing the future hope of Israel:

και εγραψα εις βιβλιον και εσφραγισαμην και διεμαρτυραμην μαρτυρας και εστησα το αργυριον εν ζυγω⁵⁵

The image of Isaiah's book (Isa. 29:11) being sealed to guard its contents also suggests sealing for protection. Closure and concealment form an essential part of a full understanding of apocalyptic concepts and uses of 'sealing' and contribute to the full meaning of the eschatological 'seal'. Completion and fulfilment enable 'sealing' to be fully understood in the context of the book of Revelation. Protecting by concealment arguably suggests that the χαρακτηρ imparted by 'sealing' is invisible until such a time that it shall be revealed.

Further references to σφραγίς are found in the Hagiographa to describe the authentication of documents (Neh. 9:38; 10:1; Est. 8:8, 10). Evidence for the use of a seal-ring representing authority is found in the book of Esther (Est.3:10). King Ahasuerus hands over his authority to Haman by giving him his ring. It is clear from the Septuagint that the ring represents the seal of authority because it represents Haman's 'ownership' of the Jews:

καί περιελόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς τὸν δακτυλὸν ἔδωκεν εἰς χεῖρα τῷ Ἀμαν σφραγίσαι κατὰ τῶν γεγραμμένων κατὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων⁵⁶

The use of both δακτυλιον and σφραγίζω emphasizes that the ring in question was the seal of authority. The book of Esther was probably written during the third century B.C. during the Hellenistic period, where the seal-ring as a sign of authority reflects a continuous tradition from Pharaoh's ring (Gen.41:42 LXX) to that of King Ahasuerus.

The book of Job contributes a different perspective to the meaning of 'seal' from that of the Pentateuch, the first book of Kings and Esther. It is widely accepted that the book dates from

⁵⁵ Jer. 39:10 LXX And I wrote it in a book and sealed it and took the testimony of witness, and weighed the money in the balance; Jer. 32:10 RSV.

⁵⁶ Est. 3:10 LXX And the king took off his ring, and gave it into the hands of Aman, to seal the decrees against the Jews.

the beginning of the fifth century B.C. and that it was written by an Israelite author, after Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The experience of exile and the teaching of the early prophets would also have influenced concepts of sealing within the Jewish community of the time, paving the way for eschatological interpretations of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω in apocalyptic writing, and providing a distinctly religious dimension to the developing concepts of sealing. The term σφραγίζω (to seal) is used figuratively in the Septuagint (Job 9:7; 14:7; 24:16; 37:7 LXX) to denote sealing for concealment or prevention:

ο λεγων τω ηλιω και ουκ ανατελλει κατα δε αστρων κατασφραγιζει⁵⁷

The author of Job refers here to God sealing the stars, in part of a discourse on the power of God, characteristically rich in eschatological imagery. Job's personal suffering and longing for refuge represent the human misery of a post-exilic nation:

Εν χειρι παντος ανθρωπου κατασφραγιζει ινα γνω πας ανθρωπος την εαυτου ασθενειαν⁵⁸

Job's case represents the paradox of the traditional view that suffering is brought about by sin; the possibility that the good can suffer reveals the need to trust in the justice of God who has the power to save his people:

Εσφραγισας δε μου τας ανομιαις εν βαλλαντιω επεσημηνω δε ει τι ακων παρεβην⁵⁹

Figurative use of sealing for hiding sin in Job suggests the beginning of association of sealing to forgiveness. The exception is the metaphor for the colours of morning in the context of God's wisdom used the English translations:

It is changed like clay under the seal... (Job 38:14 RSV)

⁵⁷ Job 9:7 Who commands the sun, and it rises not; and he seals up the stars.

⁵⁸ Job 37:7 LXX He seals up the hand of every man, that every man may know his own weakness.

⁵⁹ Job 14:17 LXX Thou hast sealed up my transgressions in a bag, and marked if I have been guilty of any transgression unawares.

This is the only occasion that the term ‘seal’ in Job refers to a physical seal. Archaeological evidence⁶⁰ reveals that the ‘clay seal’ would have been the soft clay used to make an imprint, providing an example of the way in which ‘seal’ is used to denote an ‘imprint’.

Other references to sealing in Wisdom literature include the imagery in the Song of Songs,⁶¹ which, like Job, dates from the Persian Period 538-323 B.C:

Κηπος κεκλεισμένος αδελφή μου νύμφη κηπος κεκλεισμένος πηγὴ εσφραγισμένη⁶²

The comparison of the bride to a ‘sealed fountain’ suggests sealing as closing up or preventing, similar to a meaning represented in the book of Job. The Septuagint uses the verb κλείω⁶³ to describe the garden and σφραγίζω to describe the fountain. It is in examining the imagery associated with πηγὴ that the meaning of ‘sealed’ can be clarified in context. Πηγὴ means a source of enjoyment as well as a source of water, both representing life. Thus the ‘sealed fountain’ is an image for a bride guarded for her bridegroom, showing ‘sealing’ for possession, although the possession in this example is not identified by any imprint. Instead, this interpretation is consistent with the ‘closed garden’ as a metaphor for the charms of the bride which are unavailable until marriage. Thus ‘sealing’ is shown for closure in the literal sense and as a figure for possession.

The simile ‘θέξ με ὡς σφραγιδα ἐπὶ τὸν καρδίαν σου ὡς σφραγιδα ἐπὶ τὴν βραχίονα σου’⁶⁴ recalls the Deuteronomic instruction to let the words ‘stay in your heart’ (Deut. 6:6) and ‘fasten them on your hand as a sign’ (Deut.6:9). It recalls the connection between σφραγίς and σημεῖον as well as the implication that seals of authority were worn hanging from the neck. But the image of ‘a seal on your heart’ expresses much more than a label depicting

⁶⁰ Albenda, ‘Of Gods, Men and Monsters’.

⁶¹ The Song 4:12 LXX; Song of Solomon 4:12; 8:6 RSV.

⁶² The Song 4:12 LXX My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed.

⁶³ to shut, lock.

⁶⁴ The Song 8:6 LXX Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm...

ownership. This simile refers to possession of the beloved by the lover in a proclamation of the power of love itself.

Use of simile is also found in the deuterocanonical book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus),⁶⁵ to emphasize high value attributed to a person or a quality:

Almsgiving is like a signet to him (Si. 17:22).

That the term σφραγίς in the Septuagint denotes something that is precious and represents authority is further emphasised by comparing Zerubbabel to a 'signet ring on the right hand' (Si. 49:11)⁶⁶ which represents Zerubbabel's authority as Yahweh's chosen one. Further imagery comparing the pleasures of banqueting to the preciousness of bejewelled seals (Si. 32:5,6) demonstrates the high worth given to the possession of a seal as a mark of authority. The versatility of that authority is also brought out by the instruction to 'use your seal' (Si.42:6) as a sign of authority to control an interfering wife. Although the Greeks had their own established tradition of sealing for religious and secular purposes, Ben Sira also shows adherence to ancient Jewish customs, for example by reference to Aaron's ephod with stones 'cut like seals' (Si. 45:11).

The theme of sealing for prevention is also used in the deuterocanonical book of Wisdom as a metaphor for how godless people view life and death:

For our days are the passing of a shadow,
our end is without return,
the seal is affixed and nobody comes back (Wis.2:5 NJB).

The 'seal' prevents the return of the dead to life, emphasising its finality. The Greek σφραγίζω suggests the permanence of the 'seal' in this context. The Greek use of σφραγίζω with στρέφω⁶⁷ also suggests sealing for irreversibly, for the prevention of return. Wisdom's hellenised Jewish writer provides a further example of how concepts of σφραγίς became

⁶⁵ Ecclesiasticus, the Latin title is used in the NJB, abbreviated 'Si' for Sirach (Ben Sira), the Greek title. The NJB translation is used in this section.

⁶⁶ See also Hg. 2:23.

⁶⁷ turn

absorbed into scripture and thereafter into the consciousness of New Testament writers with a background in Judaism.

The metaphorical use of terms relating to σφραγίς in the Prophets and the Writings express clearly closure, prevention of access, concealment and irreversibility. They contribute to a network of meanings received by New Testament writers. Although some of these meanings are elusive by themselves, together they prepare for the idea that the seal could be understood as a prophylactic against evil and that it is irreversible. Concepts and attitudes to 'sealing' which must have emerged as a result of the experience of the literal use of 'sealing', contributed to the understanding by the people of Palestine of what 'sealing' represented and enabled a more figurative use of the terms σφραγίς and σφραγιζω. In this way terms relating to σφραγίς and σφραγιζω also contributed to different meanings of 'sealing' which would have made a significant impression on people's religious and cultural heritage. For this reason, themes of 'sealing' such as prevention, irreversibility, the possession of one individual by another, and concealment, which appear in the Prophets and the Writings, contribute to the imagery and application of terms relating to 'sealing' drawn on in subsequent Jewish and early Christian rites of initiation.

'Seal' in Apocalyptic Literature

The book of Daniel provides the most comprehensive picture of the different concepts of sealing that were understood by the second century B.C. Written between 167 and 164 B.C., during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, the finished work is the product of a period of enforced hellenisation and early synthesis of Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek⁶⁸, despite its

⁶⁸ Most of the book of Daniel was written in Hebrew, but the section from 2:4 to the end of chapter 7 was written in Aramaic. The deuterocanonical chapters 13 and 14 survive in Greek, but L.S. David includes Bel and the Dragon in his reference to the original Aramaic scripts (David, L.S. 1991 cited in M^c.Lay, T.E. 'The Old Greek Translation of Daniel IV-VI and the Formation of the Book of Daniel' *Vetus Testamentum* 55 no.3 (2005), p.309-310).

anachronistic settings during the Babylonian Period. The historical book of Esther and the deuterocanonical book of Wisdom also reveal 'sealing' written during a period of hellenisation. Ezekiel's visions mark the beginning of the apocalyptic tradition, but it is the book of Daniel that is rich in traditional, literal meanings and 'sealing' within eschatological imagery.

A literal reference to sealing for closure, prevention of opening or access, and the authority of the king's signet is contained in the sealing of Daniel's pit:

Τότε Δανιηλ ερριφη εις τον λακκον των λεοντων και ηνεχθη λιθος και ετεθη εις το στομα του λακκου και εσφραγισατο ο βασιλευς εν τω δακτυλιω εαυτου και εν τοις δακτυλοις των μεγιστανων αυτου οπως μη απ' αυτων αρθη ο Δανιηλ η ο βασιλευς αυτον ανασπαση εκ του λακκου... ο θεος τα στοματα των λεοντων και ου παρηνωχλησαν τω Δανιηλ.⁶⁹

The Septuagint's use of σφραγίζω and δακτυλιον verifies that the sealing was an action of the king's authority, by the use of his personal seal-ring, to prevent anyone's access to save Daniel. The same meaning is demonstrated in the use of the phrase και εσφραγισατο ο βασιλευς εν τω δακτυλιω εαυτου. The sealing by the king's ring and that of his lords, suggests a multiple sealing which would emphasise the ratification and intractability of the king's decision. Daniel's understanding that God's angel had 'sealed the lions' jaws' (Dan. 6:23) is an unambiguous use of sealing for closure. The same theme is reiterated in Bel and the Dragon, which shows consistency in literary use of the term σφραγίς between the original Aramaic of the text in chapter 6 and the Greek supplement, chapter 14. In a similar vein to Isaiah's sealed book (Isa. 8:16; 29:11) sealing the locked door with a 'personal seal' (Dan. 14:11) and 'the king's seal' (Dan. 14:14) represent closure. In contrast to the representation of authority by the king's seal on Daniel's pit, the seal on the locked door of the

⁶⁹ Dan. 6:18-19 LXX And they brought a stone and put it at the mouth of the den and the king sealed it with his ring and with the ring of his nobles that the case might not be altered with regard to Daniel... God... shut the mouths of the lions and they did not molest Daniel.

temple of Bel is understood as a literal seal in the question ‘Are the seals intact?’ (Dan. 14:18). The theme of sealing for closure is thus represented literally, as the seal itself and the authority carried by the action of sealing.

The theme of sealing for concealment is clearly represented in the Angel Gabriel’s instruction to Daniel over the vision of the ram and the he-goat as illustrated by the phrase σφραγισον την ορασιν⁷⁰. The time lapse between Daniel’s visions and their realisation is in contrast to those of Ezekiel (Ezek. 12:21-28), and shows a concept of ‘sealing’ for a specific period in contrast to the permanence implied by the description of sealing Daniel’s pit with the king’s signet.

The Angel Gabriel’s instruction that seventy weeks were required ‘for placing the seal on sin’ suggests sealing for closure:

εβδομηκοντα εβδομαδες συνετηθηνσαν επι τον λαον σου και επι την πολιν την αγιαν συντελεσθηναι αμαρτιαν και του σφραγισαι αμαρτιας και απαλειψαι τας αδικιας και του εξιλασθαι αδικιας και του αγαγειν δικαιοσυνην αιωνιον και του σφραγισαι ορασιν και προφητην και του χρισαι αγιον αγαων σου του.⁷¹

The terms σφραγις and τετέλεσται imply a sense of completion rather than imposed termination.

The comprehensive meaning of sealing as completing or fulfilment is similar to that represented by Ezekiel (Ezek. 28:12), and is demonstrated in the Angel’s reference to both the sealing up of sin and the perfecting of the vision in order to anoint the Most Holy – suggesting a completion of something long awaited.

The fulfilment of prophecy attained at the end of a given period of time is the reconstruction of Jerusalem during the Persian period (Dan. 9:24-27). The passage is not in itself eschatological, but it prepares the ground for later development of the concept of the eschatological seal.

⁷⁰ Dan.8:26 LXX seal up the vision.

⁷¹ Dan. 9:24 LXX Theodotian’s version: Seventy weeks have been determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, for sin to be ended, and to seal up transgressions and to blot out the iniquities, and to make atonement for the iniquities and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal the vision and the prophet and to anoint the Most Holy.

Sealing is depicted for completion and ratification of what already exists, but relates to a guarantee of things to come. The use of σφραγίς in the Septuagint is evidence that the concepts of sealing were sufficiently grounded in tradition for the term to be used synthetically to describe apocalyptic thinking. Perhaps most innovative as far as concepts of sealing are represented in Daniel, is the change from 'sealing' as a permanent ratification or closure to that within a given time frame for a particular purpose (cf Isa. 8:16). So far, only intimated in the Song of Songs 4:12 and Job 14:17 the eschatological purpose of sealing is introduced in Daniel:

και συ Δανιηλ εμφραξον τους λογους και σφραγισον το βιβλιον εως καιρου εως συντελειας διδαχθωσι πολλοι και πλησθυνθη η γνωσις.⁷²

This distinctly apocalyptic reference to sealing in the context of a divine secret, which will be revealed at the end of time, culminates in the eschatological imagery of broken seals in Revelation 5-6; 22:10. The two references to sealing until the end of time (Dan. 12:4, 9) demonstrate the connection between the figurative use of the language of 'sealing', the expectation of deliverance from contemporary political oppression and the Jewish messianic hope for a future time yet to be revealed.

Different meanings of literal and eschatological closure for 'sealing' are contained in the same book. This needs some consideration in the light of current debate about the formation of the book of Daniel, if the interpretations of 'sealing' are to be appropriated to the correct sources. The origins of chapter 6 are given priority below to establish the source of the traditional interpretation of 'sealing' portrayed in chapter 6 and echoed in Bel and the Dragon.

M^cLay⁷³ discusses the distinctiveness of chapters 4 to 6, supporting the hypothesis that these chapters are the product of a different translator. M^cLay's argument is verified by the

⁷² Dan. 12:4, LXX, Theodotion's version: And thou, Daniel, close the words and seal the book until the end of time; until many are taught and knowledge is increased.

⁷³ M^cLay, 'Formation of the Book of Daniel' p.304-323.

observation that the Old Greek of chapters 4 to 6 is markedly different in style and language to the Masoretic Text or Theodotion. It is probable that the stories of Daniel chapters 2 to 6 were originally Aramaic, and translated into Greek earlier than the rest of the book. Whilst translation may to some degree account for differences in literary style, the question of how far these passages can be attributed to different authorship is more significant to the analysis of the meaning of 'sealing'. M^cLay refers to 'a fairly broad consensus among Daniel scholars that the stories in (ii)iii-v were independent compositions that were adopted and redacted later in the Maccabean period'.⁷⁴ The Maccabean influence on the stories of Daniel would account for the similarity between the portrayal of 'sealing' with the king's signet to authorise an action in Daniel chapter 6 and Esther chapters 3 and 8.

Focus on apocalyptic 'sealing' for secrecy until the glorification of the righteous at the end of time sets the book of Daniel apart from the traditional prophets and defines the eschatological imagery implied in the Wisdom literature. Thus the ground is prepared in reference to sealing' in Daniel chapters 8, 9 and 12 for the New Testament understanding of sealing with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee for future salvation.⁷⁵

In conclusion, it is evident from considering the different concepts of 'sealing' in the book of Daniel that two distinct meanings are presented: the traditional use of literal sealing for closure, sometimes ratified by a stamp of the king's ring (Dan. 6:18,23; 14:11,14,18) and apocalyptic sealing. The eschatological purpose of 'sealing' is markedly different from those identified from scriptural evidence before the book of Daniel, and comprise a challenging theology; the imagery not only underpins the individual's hope in the promise of salvation, but the eschatological hope of the whole Christian community.

⁷⁴ M^cLay, 'Formation of the Book of Daniel' p.309.

⁷⁵ Eph. 1:13-14 ἀπαβών in v.14 translates as 'down-payment', 'pledge' or 'guarantee'.

Herein lies the foundation for understanding the concepts of eschatological sealing that would have been available to New Testament writers and were later developed in the book of Revelation. The terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω in the Septuagint show a second century B.C. understanding of many concepts based on traditional practice and used both literally and figuratively. That the term is used in translation of the *Tanakh* shows the development of concepts of sealing reflected in the original Hebrew and Aramaic texts.

Before 500 B.C. the scriptural use of 'seal' comprised the literal use of sealing as a mark of authority or contractual agreement (Gen. 38:18; 41:42; Ex. 28:11,21,36; 39:6,14,30; 1 Kg. 21:8; Jer. 32:10). Judah's seal (Gen.38:18), as a pledge, prepares the ground for later connections between sealing and the *eschaton*. Sealing as a symbol or bodily mark of covenant to denote belonging or protection in the Pentateuch (Gen. 4:15; 17:10; 34:14; Ex. 12:13; Lev. 19:23; Deut. 6:8-9) demonstrates the significance of sealing as a prophylactic from the earliest times, preparing the way for the metaphorical use of 'seal' to conceal or shut up in order to guard or prevent access. Similarly Ezekiel's metaphorical seal as fulfilment (Ezek.28:12) shows an early reference to a concept of sealing that was characteristic of later apocalyptic writing.

From 500 B.C. the influence of the Persians and then the Greeks brought a culture change and with that came a more figurative use of terms relating to σφραγίς and σφραγίζω in scriptural genre. The traditional use of sealing to ratify agreements (Est. 8:8; Dan.6:18) and as a symbol of authority (Est.3:10) marked with a signet ring remains, as evidenced in the books of Daniel and Esther, in addition to which there is a clear representation of sealing for closure and concealment. Sophisticated apocalyptic interpretations, in which sealing conceals specific information until the Day of Redemption connect the concept of σφραγίς to that of ἀρραβών, a pledge or guarantee, in the context of future salvation.

Historical Evidence of the Practice of ‘Sealing’ outside Christianity from the First Century B.C – to the Early Christian Era.

Pagan Traditions

Greek, Roman and Jewish historical and extra-testamental sources demonstrate how concepts of sealing developed, and were applied in Roman Palestine at the dawn of the Christian era. The association of σφραγίς to branding was by no means limited to branding animals. Reference to the practice of branding war captives during the first century B.C. is made in the second psalm of Solomon, which portrays the siege of Jerusalem:

The sons and daughters were in grievous captivity, sealed was their neck and branded (was it) among the nations.⁷⁶

Use of the word σφραγίδι in the Greek text strengthens the meaning of sealing for possession and links sealing to the practice of branding. Slaves, similarly, were branded with the mark of their owners. Lampe cites Plutarch as evidence to suggest that branding cattle to set them apart for sacrifice may have influenced the metaphor of baptismal signing into ‘Christ’s flock’ or ‘accompanying rites’.⁷⁷

Branding is referred to in 3 Maccabees as a way to mark out those who complied with the regulation to register as Jews:

None of those who do not sacrifice shall enter their sanctuaries, and all Jews shall be subjected to a registration involving poll tax and to the status of slaves. Those who object to this are to be taken by force and put to death; those who are registered are also to be branded on their bodies by fire with the ivy-leaf symbol of Dionysus, and they shall also be reduced to their former limited status.⁷⁸

The ‘status’ refers to that of slavery, and so the mark by branding, comprises both the mark of identification as a slave and also a mark which sets limits on the practice of their faith. The

⁷⁶ *Psalm of Solomon* 2:6.

⁷⁷ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.9.

⁷⁸ 3 Macc. 2:28-29 <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/3maccabees.html>.

imprint of the symbol of Dionysus was also a deliberate travesty of the Jewish law and identity: you will not tattoo yourselves (Lev. 19:28). This instruction, published as an inscription in stone,⁷⁹ suggests a similar understanding of the written seal of authority to that ratified by a signet. The authority of the inscription is consistent with 'seal' described by Jewish historian, Josephus, during the first century A.D.⁸⁰ Josephus maintains continuity of the scriptural concept of the 'seal' being the signet ring itself and its impression as a mark of authority in his reference to Queen Helena who established Monobazus as king, crowned him 'and gave him his father's ring as a signet; as also the ornament which they call Sampser, and exhorted him to administer the affairs of the kingdom'.⁸¹ Consistent with scriptural references to 'sealing' to legitimize an agreement, Josephus refers to 'rolling up the letter and sealing it again' to secure Dosethius's service to Herod.⁸²

That concepts of sealing as a symbol of authority marked by a signet and its imprint, and as a bodily mark of ownership or to set apart were understood during intertestamental times is clear from Greek, Roman and Jewish sourced evidence, and can be traced to earlier practice. The practice of sealing as a permanent bodily mark used to identify slaves and to whom they belonged, well known in Roman times, would probably have also become familiar to early Christian writers.

It is widely accepted that literal sealing as a bodily mark was commonplace outside Judaism as a mark of possession by someone else, social identity, status or protection, and that the mark itself would have been in the form of a brand or a tattoo. Although the reasons for 'sealing' people with a physical mark varied, it is the commonality between them that highlights the

⁷⁹ 3 Macc.2:27 <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/3maccabees.html> .

⁸⁰ Josephus *Antiquities* 15.6 cited by Woodcock, 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit', p.142; 2:2 <http://earlychristianwritings.com>.

⁸¹ Josephus *Antiquities* 2:2 www.earlychristianwritings.com .

⁸² Josephus *Antiquities* 15:6 www.reluctant-messenger.com/josephus.

question of what happens when people are sealed. In all of these examples of conferring a physical mark, the marking is literal and the effects outward and observable. This historical evidence can be seen to illustrate that the physical imprint denotes a particular purpose or expected behaviour from its bearer.

Jewish Traditions: 'sealed' with a physical mark

To understand fully the roots of a theology of 'sealing' in the New Testament and Early Church it is essential to examine carefully the ways in which σφραγίς became associated with the mark of *Tau* and name of God as the tetragrammaton YHWH.

Sealing people in pre-Christian Judaism similarly may include a physical mark as a sign of possession and protection. In addition to the prophylactic purpose of Cain's mark (Gen. 4:15), Lampe⁸³ describes it as 'the distinguishing badge of the tribe' which identifies members as belonging to God. Furthermore, Lampe states that it 'appears probable' that Yahwist prophets were branded or tattooed with a distinguishing mark on their foreheads.⁸⁴ This suggestion strengthens the idea that the 'seal' or imprint was conferred for the purpose of divine protection and identity. For example, the prophet who condemned Ahab deliberately disguised himself by covering his forehead, and was immediately recognised as a prophet when he removed the covering (1 Kg. 20:38, 41). The protection of God's chosen people by the imprint of a cruciform *Tau*⁸⁵ in Ezekiel's vision, however, brings the physical seal into the context of eschatological protection, and is described by Lampe⁸⁶ as 'a sign set by God upon his elect to mark them as his own and protect them from destruction'. The Rabbinic Anthology clarifies the meaning of the protection given by the mark of *Tau*:

⁸³ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.14.

⁸⁴ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.14 evidences this from 1 Kg. 20:41 and Zech. 13:6.

⁸⁵ Ezek. 9:4-6. Although the Septuagint uses σμῆλον in verses 4 and 6, the Hebrew text evidences that the sign was in the form of *Tau*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which would have been written as a cross. It is reasonable to suspect that this cruciform 'seal' was a pre-cursor to marking with a *Tau* represented as T, which could later have become identified with the Christian cross. On scriptural evidence this is impossible to prove beyond conjecture.

⁸⁶ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.15.

The aged, the young, the virgin, infants and women, shall ye slay for the destroyer, but to none shall ye draw near that has the mark (*Tau*) upon him.⁸⁷

Montefiore and Lowe explain that 'the *Tau* is the conclusion of God's seal' which explains the connection of *Tau* to YHWH through the concept of truth (*'emeth*.)⁸⁸ Moore states that truth 'is the seal of God'. Because he likens the use of first, middle and last letters (*Alef, Mem and Tau*) to God's description of himself as 'the first and the last'⁸⁹ the connection between God, seal and truth is reinforced. Freedman and Simon suggest the God's seal is truth and it is connected both to God's judgement and God's seal to ratify the verdict.⁹⁰

The evidence considered so far therefore concludes that σφραγίς was the imprint itself, the χαρακτήρ, and an outward sign of possession and protection. Ezekiel's vision further suggests that this seal was conferred on the righteous for their salvation. The implication that the σφραγίς was a physical mark appears also in the non-canonical *Odes of Solomon*:

On their faces, I set my seal.⁹¹

Daniélou⁹² sees this reference to a visible seal⁹³ as important evidence that signing with *Tau*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, was used to mark members of the Essene community. He also alludes to the use of text from Ezekiel in the Damascus Document to substantiate the view that the eschatological community used the same mark of YHWH as the early Jewish Christians. Daniélou cites Origen⁹⁴ as evidence that Jews believed the letter *Tau* to have sacred power as it was seen as equivalent to the last letter of the Greek alphabet, Ω . Daniélou

⁸⁷ *Rabbinic Anthology* with comments by Montefiore, C.G. and Lowe, H. USA: World Publishing Company and Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963 edition.

⁸⁸ Montefiore and Lowe, *Rabbinic Anthology* p.307: *'emeth*, truth, is constructed out of the first, middle and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

⁸⁹ Moore, G.F. *Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian Era* vol II Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1958 p.194 – 195 cf. Isa. 44:6; 41:4.

⁹⁰ Freedman, H. and Simon, M. (eds) *Midrash Rabbah* Deuteronomy (English translation) London: Soncino Press 3rd Edition 1983 p.8.

⁹¹ *Odes* VIII 16.

⁹² Daniélou, J. *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964.

⁹³ *Odes* VIII 16.

⁹⁴ *Hom. Ezek 9* cited in Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, p.154.

describes the use of signing with *Tau* as seeming 'to touch the very oldest stratum of the rite of *signatio* in Jewish Christian circles where the Jewish X comes to represent Christ as God'.⁹⁵ A social need in pre-Christian communities to be identified for protection now and at the end of time is evident in this use of the mark of YHWH. Furthermore, individual and communal aspects of being marked are revealed as the effects of 'sealing' are applied to the eschatological community. Thus the outward mark of a community denotes its future purpose and hope. To understand what this would have meant to Jews of the New Testament era, we must consider how *Tau* equates with truth and therefore God himself by examining how the mark of YHWH became identified with the divine name.

The Name YHWH

The reverence in which Jews held the name of God is a recurrent theme in the Old Testament. The association of the term 'name' in ancient Judaism with YHWH himself is exemplified in the phrase: 'my name is in him' (Ex.23:21). That the term 'name' also refers to YHWH present in his Temple (Deut. 12:11) illustrates the concept of the Name as YHWH in his complete splendour and everything about him. Daniélou describes ancient Jewish use of the name of YHWH as being 'to designate Yahweh in his ineffable reality'.⁹⁶ Dodd refers to the association of the Name with 'the glory of God' in Isaiah 42:8⁹⁷ as 'one of the strongest statements of monotheism'.⁹⁸

Dodd states that as a person's name identifies him and symbolises his social position, so 'for the Hebrew monotheist, the name of God stands for a symbol of his sole deity, his glory and his character as righteous and holy'.⁹⁹ An example of this point made by Dodd is when Moses

⁹⁵ Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, p.154. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, p.149 draws on Dodd (1953, p.95) to cite Jn 17:11 as evidence that the Name of God is seen to manifest the Name of Christ.

⁹⁶ Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, p.148.

⁹⁷ 'I am Yahweh that is my name! I shall not yield my glory to another'.

⁹⁸ Dodd, C.H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge University Press 1953 p.95.

⁹⁹ Dodd, C.H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 93.

asked to know God's name. A voice from the burning bush replied, 'I Am who I Am'.¹⁰⁰ The revelation of YHWH to the world; knowledge of him through his name and 'I am' now and at the end of time demonstrates eschatology that is both Jewish and Christian. Dodd¹⁰¹ cites a rabbinical saying that although God's true name is unknown in the present age, it will be revealed in the future. The origins of this saying are illustrated in Deutero-Isaiah's prophecy for the liberation of Jerusalem: 'my people will know my name' (Isa. 52:6). To those, however, who already revere the name of YHWH protection is promised (Ps. 91:14-15) in a way which connects the name with σφραγίς as a seal of protection for the final judgement.

The name 'stands for and represents God himself'.¹⁰² Thus, invocation through the Name was believed to enable worshippers to experience God's presence (cf. 1 Kg. 8:43). The Prayer of Manasses refers to the Hebrew legend which held that it was the name of YHWH which sealed out the water of the primal abyss, addressing God 'who hast shut up the deep and sealed it by thy terrible and glorious Name'.¹⁰³ In this way, the name acts as a sign for the elect and a defence against their enemies. The reference to name in the context of the Prayer of Manasses demonstrates the rabbinic belief at that time, that the name held powerful properties, which were identified with the tetragrammaton YHWH. Furthermore, use of σφραγίζω 'and sealed it', echoes 'The sun, at his command, forbears to rise and on the stars he sets a seal' (Job 9:7). Both phrases demonstrate a belief in the power of the name over the processes of nature, which equate the name with God.

In both respects, the Name exhibits the character and function of the seal.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Ex. 3:14 LXX God said to Moses 'I am who he is'. And he said, this is what you say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you'.

¹⁰¹ Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, p.96.

¹⁰² Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.284.

¹⁰³ *Prayer of Manasses, King of Judah* (Charles, R.H. (ed) 1965 edition).

¹⁰⁴ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.285.

Furthermore, Lampe refers to Solomon's seal engraved with the tetragrammaton YHWH as a 'mighty and potent emblem'¹⁰⁵ which suggests a strengthening association of the concept of the seal as a mark of ownership and protection, with the power of the name of Yahweh. Daniélou suggests that it was through this understanding of the sacred properties of the Name of God that the theology of 'the Name as the manifestation of Yahweh ...came to mean the power by which God accompanies his works'.¹⁰⁶ Arguably it is this understanding of the Name which influenced later Christian writing and became associated with the cruciform mark placed on the forehead in baptismal rites. This is exemplified in New Testament references to being 'sealed' (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22) and the seal on the foreheads of those who are to be spared on Judgement Day (Rev. 7:4, 9:4).

The 'Seal' of Circumcision

Circumcision (Hebrew: *milah*) was the ultimate mark of Jewish identity. Meaning 'sealed in the flesh', circumcision came to be known as *berit milah* or the 'covenant of our father Abraham'.¹⁰⁷

As we have already seen, Abraham's circumcision (Gen. 17:10) provided a pivotal moment in the early concept of physical marking as a sign of possession. In addition to Abraham's circumcision, scripture evidences that the rite was used as pre-marriage initiation, to signify belonging to a particular tribe or family (Gen. 34:14; Ex. 4:24-26; Lev. 19:23). Abraham's circumcision, however, was the beginning of a rite that marked initiates with seal of God's promise to them and set them apart as his chosen people:

And ye shall be circumcised on the flesh of your foreskin and it shall be a sign of a covenant between you and me.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.284; Lampe cites Sirach XIVII and *Gittin* 68a.

¹⁰⁶ Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, p.150.

¹⁰⁷ Werblowsky R.J.Z. and Wigodor G. (eds) *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* Oxford University Press 1997.

Wyatt¹⁰⁹ argues that circumcision is the ‘ritual seal on the covenant’¹¹⁰ and that circumcision and Abraham’s renaming are both different ways of marking the covenant relationship between God and man. Furthermore, the covenant is marked by the promise of descendents and land (Gen. 15:18). However, while Wyatt suggests the circumcision is one of four symbols which mark the covenant, it is arguable that circumcision equates to the covenant itself. The interchangeable use of covenant and circumcision implies more than a sense of belonging but taking on a new identity. The Hebrew *berit milah* conveys a connection between σφραγίς and εικὼν as it suggests taking on the image and likeness of God and creates its own sense of identity and purpose:

If we have no merit, then look to the covenant of circumcision.¹¹¹

Details of Abraham’s circumcision in the Midrash Rabbah and the phrase ‘and didst cut a covenant with him’¹¹² both exemplifies the synonymy between covenant and circumcision and illustrates circumcision as being an act of God with the chosen recipient. This is further exemplified with reference to the righteousness of the tribe of Levi.¹¹³ The literal sign of circumcision is therefore represented from its earliest scriptural reference as a sign of the covenant: ‘My covenant between me and thee’.¹¹⁴ The equation between circumcision and a ‘seal’ is clearly stated and connected to its Jewish heritage:

The covenant which he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac, He established unto Jacob as a seal...to Israel as an everlasting covenant.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Gen 17:11 LXX, Benton, L. (trans.) *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, USA: Zondervan Publishing House 1982.

¹⁰⁹ Wyatt, N. ‘Circumcision and Circumstance: male genital mutilation in Ancient Israel and Ugarit’ *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33.4 (2009) p.405-431.

¹¹⁰ Wyatt, ‘Circumcision and Circumstance’ p.407.

¹¹¹ Lev. (Emor) 31:4 in Freedman and Simon (eds) *Midrash Rabbah* (English translation) 3rd Edition 1983 p.398

¹¹² Neh. 9:7 in Freedman and Simon (eds) *Midrash Rabbah* p.420 reinforces Genesis chapter 17 by detailing Abraham’s circumcision.

¹¹³ Deut. 33:9 cited in Freedman and Simon (eds) *Midrash Rabbah* p. 653.

¹¹⁴ Gen. 17: 7 in Freedman and Simon (eds) *Midrash Rabbah* p.420 (editors’ italics).

¹¹⁵ Ps. 105:10 Nemoy, L. (ed) *The Midrash on Psalms*, Yale Judaica Series Vol. XIII Braude, W.G. (trans) USA: Yale University Press 1959 p.194.

The use of σημειον suggests that the physical mark of circumcision points to the covenant between God and his people, showing how σημειον contributes to the shades of meaning associated with σφραγίς. Skinner¹¹⁶ believes that the writer's ideas in verse 10 are sufficiently flexible for circumcision to be both the covenant and a sign of the covenant. The need for individuals and their descendents to keep the covenant between themselves and God, suggests both present and future, and could be interpreted as both the covenant and the sign that points towards the covenant to come. Freedman and Simon illustrate how the term 'covenant' is used synonymously with circumcision in the *Midrash Rabbah* with reference to the psalms:

For the merit of circumcision, as it says, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and His covenant.*¹¹⁷

This implies a covenant that had been hidden until it was made known to Abraham and suggests further shades of meaning: circumcision is seen here as the sign of the covenant, the covenant itself and the revelation of something previously hidden. We can understand this better by looking at the terms σφραγίς and σημειον in the context of circumcision and Sabbath in the *Midrash Rabbah*. While circumcision marks the covenant, each Sabbath marks the renewal of the covenant which is exclusive between God and his chosen people.¹¹⁸ Freedman and Simon describe the Sabbath as 'a sign between me and the children of Israel'.¹¹⁹ The connection between circumcision and Sabbath to Jewish thinking is essential to understanding the wider network of meaning attached to 'sealing'; the practices of circumcision and observing the Sabbath defined Jewish identity.

¹¹⁶ Skinner, J. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, The International Commentary Series, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1930, p.294.

¹¹⁷ Freedman and Simon (eds) *Midrash Rabbah* p.420 cf Ps.25:14.

¹¹⁸ Freedman and Simon (eds) *Midrash Rabbah* Deuteronomy p.23.

¹¹⁹ Ex. 31:17 cited in Freedman and Simon (eds) *Midrash Rabbah* p.23.

It is arguable that circumcision is equated with the covenant itself because the sign of circumcision seals or ratifies a covenant which has already taken place. This view of circumcision as the seal of a faith already gained and a sign of a covenant already agreed is supported because Abraham received the gift of faith before he was circumcised (Gen.15:6).¹²⁰

A closer look at circumcision as a Jewish rite of initiation, during Old Testament times, also supports the hypothesis that adult circumcision was a seal of acquired faith, and a sign or mark of having entered into a relationship with God. Proselytes would have responded to questions about their faith and have been instructed in the Law before they were circumcised. In Jewish rites as they developed, they would subsequently receive a water baptism before being fully initiated into the Jewish faith. In some rites a sacrifice would have been offered as the third part of the ceremony. Two key points conclude the effects of circumcision as the 'seal' or being 'sealed' as the individual enters into a relationship with God: circumcision permanently marks the initiate as belonging to God and the gift of faith was a pre-requisite to circumcision. Exactly what the 'seal of circumcision' meant to the early Jewish community can be clarified through a closer examination of its eschatological and spiritual effects.

The eschatological effects of the physical mark of circumcision are prefigured in the circumcision of Abraham and comprise a central theme in early Jewish eschatological thinking. That adherence to the Law of Moses required people to break the bans on religious practice imposed by Antiochus I (Macc. 1:48; 60-61) resulted in a deepening of the belief that circumcision was a seal for the day of redemption. According to Jubilees 7¹²¹, those who remained outside the Covenant by being uncircumcised were destined for destruction because they had no 'sign' of belonging to the Lord. Moreover, as a physical mark, circumcision enabled those with the 'sign' of God's Covenant to recognise each other. During the

¹²⁰ The context is the seal of acquired faith in adult circumcision.

¹²¹ Jubilees 7 cited by Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, p.15.

Maccabaeen era, when many were abandoning the Law, others were prepared to die for it (1 Macc. 1:63). The eschatological motif of separating those who belonged from those who did not was prefigured within their own community. During times of Maccabaeen and post-Maccabaeen cultural change, apostates could be described as bearing circumcision as a physical mark only, while those with a firm belief in the Covenant into which they had been signed by circumcision would have been those who stood by their faith in the face of persecution. Thus, the eschatological effects of circumcision demonstrate that by being 'sealed' into a relationship with God, initiates were also marked out for protection from destruction at the end of time.

Abraham's circumcision (Gen. 17:10) as the mark of his covenant with God, was not only a physical sign, but also a statement of commitment, signifying Abraham's change of heart. Circumcision of the heart as a spiritual obligation requiring a positive response to God is evident in the Torah: 'circumcise your heart, then be obstinate no longer' (Deut. 10:16). The curses which conclude the book of Leviticus include warnings to apostates that 'their uncircumcised hearts will grow humble and they will receive punishment for their guilt' (Lev.26:41).

The same theme of spiritual circumcision is further developed in the prophets. Jeremiah, despairing of Israel's lack of commitment to God, demands 'circumcise yourselves for Yahweh, apply circumcision to your hearts' (Jer.4:4). For Jeremiah, circumcision as a symbol of the covenant with God was useless without complete commitment in love. This metaphor encapsulates the essence of what it meant to be sealed as God's people: the mark of protection and belonging was conferred on those who had made a commitment to God out of faith and love. Circumcision, during Old Testament times, therefore denoted a spiritual seal which ratified the relationship with God through faith and love, and a physical mark of that

relationship. It identified initiates as belonging to God in the present time and for the Day of Judgement:

And the circumcision was given to him later, as a sign and guarantee that the faith which he had while still uncircumcised was reckoned to him as uprightness. In this way Abraham was to be the ancestor of all believers who are uncircumcised, so that they might be reckoned as upright (Rom. 4:11).

The Background of Anointing

Anointing comprises pouring sacred oil (χρίσμα- Ex. 30:25 LXX) for the purpose of consecration.¹²² The purpose of investigating Old Testament anointing to shed light on the meaning of Christian sacramental sealing is that it is essential to consider the background to anointing with the Spirit by which Christians are sealed in baptism, confirmation and holy orders. Sealing and anointing are both actions of marking to set apart. 'Sealing' is discussed both as the action of sealing (σφραγίζω), and the imprint of that seal (σφραγίς). Anointing, however, is discussed as a rite of pouring oil which identifies a change in the recipient, such as the consecration of kings and priests. It is considered here because of its close relation to σφραγίς, the light it sheds on terms relating to σφραγίς and the way in which it may have influenced New Testament thought. The anointing discussed below does not make direct use of the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω. Anointing in the New Testament is epitomised in Jesus' description of himself as 'someone whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world' (Jn. 10:36). In the same way that the high priest was consecrated by anointing, Jesus was consecrated for his mission. Exodus 19:6 refers to 'a kingdom of priests, a holy nation' and 1 Peter 2:9 refers to the new priesthood 'a chosen race, a kingdom of priests a holy nation' alluding to the special relationship between God and his Church.

¹²² The understanding that oil had sacred properties was connected to its use to bring physical relief and healing. The sacred character of anointing oil is illustrated in God's prescription to Moses as to how it was to be made (Ex. 30:22-25). And that Moses used the anointing to consecrate the room, the altar and the vessels used in the investiture of Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8:10-12). Ancient rites of anointing, like sealing in its early form as signing for identification, were grounded in known beliefs and practices.

Anointing performed as the consecration of kings in ancient Judaism must be considered in close relation to that of priests because of the belief that kings were also divinely appointed, as depicted in the consecration of Saul (1 Sam. 10:1-2). To ratify their divine appointment, kings were anointed either by a priest or a prophet. This marking of 'Yahweh's anointed' (1 Sam. 24:7; 26:9,16), not only set the kings apart, but also confirmed their appointment; both functions which clearly relate to σφραγίς in its meaning as an 'authentication' and 'a mark of ownership.'¹²³ That anointing was believed to be conferred by God through the action of a prophet or priest is exemplified through the words of Samuel: 'Has not Yahweh anointed you as leader of his people Israel?' (1 Sam. 10:1). Consistent with the anointing of Aaron and his sons by Moses, and Saul by Samuel, Solomon was anointed by the priest Zadok (1 Kg. 1:34). David was anointed with oil by Samuel to mark his selection by God 'and the Spirit of Yahweh seized on David from that day onwards' (1 Sam 16:13). David's anointing is particularly significant for it included the gift of the Spirit in a way that prefigures the prophet's mission in Isaiah:

'the Spirit of the Lord is on me for Yahweh has anointed me'

Elijah's instruction to anoint Elisha to succeed him as prophet further exemplifies how prophets could be spoken of as anointed because they received the Spirit (cf. Is. 61:1) even though they were not anointed with oil as priests, prophets and kings. Furthermore, the ritual bath required of Aaron and his sons for purification before anointing (Ex.29:4) implies a form of βαπτισμός – ritual washing. This suggests that the sacred action of anointing required the individual to be symbolically in a state of purity; although this is not consistent with all accounts of anointing, it is consistent with ritual washing that became attached to circumcision in Jewish initiation. The sacred action of anointing depicted in the Old Testament provides a network of ideas that were likely to have been

¹²³ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, p.8.

drawn upon, consciously or unconsciously, by New Testament writers and attached to sealing as an image for being marked as chosen by God and set apart for a specific purpose.

The relation between the historical and scriptural background of sealing and the catechetical themes

Lemaire¹²⁴ states that North-West Semitic seals were used to ratify agreements and to depict administrative roles. He argues the study of these seals' inscriptions sheds light on the lives of significant biblical figures and therefore supports the study of scripture.

Lemaire's argument also supports the view that the historical use of seals to authenticate agreement and denote administrative roles would have been part of the awareness of New Testament writers, who brought concepts of 'sealing' into a Christian context. Lemaire emphasizes that practices of 'sealing' and owning seals were widely known. Moreover, it is essentially from within scripture that the scene is set for secular concepts of sealing to acquire religious connotations.

By examining Jewish scriptural use of 'sealing' we are introduced to a tri-dimensional view that is essential to understanding 'sealing' in the Christian sacraments: looking back to the historical and theological background of 'sealing' enables us to understand its meaning in pre-Christian Judaism; this leads us to understand how it evolved to apply to baptism and confirmation which it turn points to its eschatological future.

The antecedents of a theology of 'sealing' in Christian baptism and confirmation as a mark of identity or belonging can be perceived in the literal use of the imprint of a seal exemplified for example in 'sealing' slaves, in Abraham's circumcision, and in the mark of *Tau*. Furthermore, it is probable that the association of the mark of *Tau* with the Name of God prefigured New

¹²⁴ Lemaire, 'Recherches sur les Sceaux'.

Testament thinking about being baptised into the name of Christ. Goltzen¹²⁵ sees this 'character' as being the meaning expressed by Ezekiel's *Tau* (Ezek. 9:4-6). Together with circumcision as the 'seal' of the covenant, Goltzen expresses a connection between the literal χαρακτήρ of a brand and σφραγίς as the 'seal' of circumcision. Goltzen's view requires an acceptance that the σημειον, sign of circumcision is synonymous with 'seal' which is difficult to defend without conjecture. However, he uses the connectivity of the terms χαρακτήρ and σφραγίς to introduce the New Testament portrayal of baptism as *pars pro toto*, the ἀρραβών of the Spirit received by those who have been sealed. In doing so, Goltzen enables us to understand how these early Jewish concepts of χαρακτήρ and σφραγίς provide the conceptual background for 'sealing' developed in a Christian setting by Paul, John and Luke.

None of these pre-Christian Jewish concepts and uses of 'sealing' would have had in mind a sacramental seal, which is why it is critical to avoid the pitfall of applying a later Christian interpretation to pre-Christian Jewish theology. Nonetheless, it is highly probable that concepts of physical marking for ownership, described by the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω in the Pentateuch, became known to New Testament writers with a background in Judaism. Arguably these early Jewish concepts are at the root of a later Christian comparison between the physical mark and the invisible 'character' or imprint of the likeness of Christ conferred at confirmation.

Moreover, ownership ratified by a seal, such as Jeremiah's field, and the authentication of a role, such as Joseph receiving Pharaoh's ring, adumbrates the catechetical theme of authentication. The symbolic use of the 'sealed deed of purchase' (Jer.32:14 RSV) for Jeremiah's field to represent the future hope of Israel also places 'sealing' into the context of rights of inheritance and redemption for those of the tribe of Benjamin. Sealing as a metaphor for hiding sin in Job also suggests the beginning of association of sealing to forgiveness. These

¹²⁵ Goltzen, 'Inchoatio et Perfectio'.

examples in the books of Jeremiah and Job arguably provide a background which may have been drawn on by New Testament thinkers to connect σφραγίς with ἀρραβών, a down-payment on salvation. 'Sealing', with its theological origins in scripture and many different nuances of meaning, evolved into the New Testament and is later applied to the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. The connection between the 'seal', the gift of the Spirit and the future hope of the End of Time prepares the ground for understanding the catechetical theme of a down-payment on salvation in the modern Church.

The allusion to sealing as a metaphor for hiding sin, in the book of Job, provides an early context for first century Christian thought which identified forgiveness as an effect of receiving the seal of baptism (Acts 2:38). This is reinforced by the metaphor of waking from sleep (Job 14:12), which with the hindsight of later Christian interpretation, implies the hope of resurrection. Similarly the use of terms relating to σφραγίς in the Prophets and the Writings as metaphors for closure and irreversibility arguably enabled New Testament writers and theologians of the Early Church to conceive that the seal of the Holy Spirit in Christian initiation remains in the soul forever.

Furthermore, Christian understanding that the 'seal' of confirmation is impressed on the soul but not necessarily revealed in its fullness until a later time of spiritual readiness arguably lies in Jewish eschatological teaching many generations before Christianity, and not anticipating it. It is apparent that the stage is set in the book of Daniel for the development of New Testament understanding which subsequently led to catechetical teaching that the effect of 'sealing' on the newly initiated Christians can begin to be understood as sharing in the mission of Christ to bring about the Kingdom of God. This anticipates teaching that Christians are sealed into Christ as priest, prophet and king. The catechetical implications contained in evidence of the apocalyptic 'seal' of Daniel are that the four themes of sealing now encompass two distinct

aspects: that of the individual who is ‘sealed’ and that of the whole Christian community of those ‘sealed’ ‘as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial’.¹²⁶

Circumcision into the Covenant of God contributes to a network of meanings surrounding the sacramental seal because it is a physical mark as the sign of an interior or spiritual effect.

Adherence to the Law of Moses under the persecution of Antiochus (1 Macc. 1:48; 60-61) also provides early evidence of the belief that circumcision was a seal for the day of redemption.

Circumcision therefore can be identified as a prototype for Christian concepts and uses of ‘sealing’ although it is only part of a complexity of ideas that comprise the meaning of sealing which was drawn upon by New Testament writers. Circumcision denotes an outward and visible mark of identity as belonging to God whereas ‘sealing’ in Christian initiation denotes the inner character of a spiritual mark. Circumcision relates identity with authentication because it ratifies the covenant between God and his people, individually and collectively. It points to a down-payment on salvation by its purpose as a mark on God’s people for the Day of Judgement, and furthermore marks people’s willingness to live according to the Law of Moses. However, association between circumcision and ‘sealing’ in Christian initiation may lead to inconsistencies in catechetical understanding if it is taken exclusively as the only Jewish rite to prefigure the Christian sacramental seal, without considering symbolic significance of anointing in pre-Christian Judaism. Anointing, such as David’s anointing by Samuel, also provides an early understanding of ritual action which became adopted by Christians as a central to rites of initiation.¹²⁷

Conclusion

An investigation of the historical and scriptural background to the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω has shown that being ‘sealed’ was associated with being permanently marked

¹²⁶ CCC 1296 cf. Rev. 7:2-3; 9:4; Ezek. 9:4-6.

¹²⁷ A full discussion of the emergence of rites of anointing can be found in Chapter 5.

out for possession and identification. Within Judaism this could take the form of a 'seal' imprinted on the forehead, circumcision or anointing with oil. In each case the bearer was identified for a particular and permanent purpose in which he was 'sealed' by a mark or sacred rite. Evidence showing how far 'sealing' carried spiritual or eschatological effects, or whether it was clearly associated to the Name of God, reveals the different shades of meaning attached to 'sealing'. Furthermore, it is notable that all who were sealed were permanently identified as belonging to God. Σφραγίς as an imprint of possession and protection by God was an exterior mark which signified status or possession in a way which likens the effects of sealing to the effects of anointing. Σφραγίς as a mark of circumcision and *Tau* in Ezekiel's vision was an exterior mark which ratified existing faith and signified an interior state of righteousness as exemplified by Abraham's commitment to covenant with God. Finally, the seal of *Tau* in Ezekiel's vision ratified the status of the righteous for the purpose of protection at the end of time. Martos describes the seal of the Old Testament as having 'primarily a literal meaning' which had evolved in Pauline thought as 'a metaphorical way of speaking about the experience of being filled with the Spirit'. The investigation above demonstrates the different meanings that have become attached to 'sealing' have done so primarily out of literal use but also out of the development of a figurative use of 'sealing' which is rooted in the Old Testament. Martos suggests that in John 'the seal appears to be a reality which marks Christians as different from others, even as God's seal on Christ made him truly different from other human beings'.¹²⁸ In this respect it is reasonable to conclude that the secular and scriptural roots of 'sealing', depicted in terms relating to σφραγίς, suggest an historical and scriptural background for a New Testament theology of the 'seal'. Evidence of concepts and practices associated with sealing in pre-Christian Judaism carries a wealth

¹²⁸ Martos, J. *Doors to the Sacred* p.34.

of catechetical usefulness in its contribution to how New Testament writers would have understood ‘sealing’ and in its potential as a catechetical tool to enable those preparing to be confirmed to learn about identity and belonging, authentication, a down-payment on salvation and post-confirmation mission and to understand what it means to be conformed to Christ through ‘sealing’ with ‘an indelible spiritual mark’.¹²⁹

With this background in mind we are now in a position to undertake a full investigation of how key New Testament writers use the imagery of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω in a Christian context.

¹²⁹ CCC 1304.

CHAPTER 4

ΣΦΡΑΓΙΣ AND ΣΦΡΑΓΙΖΩ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Old Testament, ancient Greek and Near Eastern background constitutes a source from which New Testament writers could have derived their understanding of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω. Among these writers only Paul speaks of being sealed *with the Spirit*¹. This chapter will examine Paul's texts and a small range of texts from other authors who contribute to the theme of 'sealing' in the New Testament. Each text needs to be considered on its own merits for the allusions it conjures up and the omissions it makes. That Paul was speaking of a 'sacramental seal', or that his teaching can serve as a basis for a doctrine of a sacramental seal, needs to be proved. It is unlikely that any other New Testament writer had a concept of sacramental seal. Nor is it a foregone conclusion that the 'sealings' mentioned in the book of Revelation, though relevant to this investigation, are the 'seal of the Spirit'.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to investigate how the New Testament writers use σφραγίς, σφραγίζω and related terms, and whether these uses reflect rites and actions. The question 'what can this investigation highlight about the catechetical value of the 'seal of the Spirit' for confirmation preparation?' remains central. It will be answered by relating New Testament texts to do with 'sealing' to the four catechetical themes identified in the Introduction, and by examining the connection between the seal, the gift of the Spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and a guarantee of salvation. Some scholars have argued that the New Testament bears witness to a very early Christian rite that can be called 'confirmation'. At the other extreme, some have disconnected the Pauline teaching on the 'seal of the Spirit'

¹ He does not use the exact term 'seal of the Spirit'. Nevertheless this thesis will follow Lampe in using the phrase 'seal of the Spirit' as a convenient 'label' for the relevant concept(s) taught by Paul, and by the Christian Church on the basis of this doctrine.

from any ‘sacramental rite’. This thesis will agree with those scholars who connect Paul’s teaching on the ‘seal of the Spirit’ with his theology of baptism, and will argue that σφραγίς and σφραγίζω as found in the writings of the Johannine corpus are also relevant to a theology of baptism. The emergence of a distinct rite that came to be called confirmation and recognised as a distinct sacrament is the subject of the following chapter. The legitimacy of transferring the Pauline teaching on the ‘seal of the Spirit’ from the theology of baptism to that of confirmation will be touched on in that and the final chapter, though a thorough demonstration of this legitimacy would require a further thesis. The New Testament texts that shall be investigated are set out in tables below:

Table 1: Main New Testament texts concerning sealing and related concepts	
Reference	Greek text and English translation (key parts in bold)
Eph. 1:13-14	<p>Εν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκουσάντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες ἐσφραγισθῆτε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ ὁ ἐστὶν ἀρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως, εἰς ἐπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.</p> <p>In him you also, who have heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit , who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. [RSV]</p>
Eph. 4:30	<p>Καὶ μὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἐσφραγισθῆτε εἰς ἡμέραν ἀπολύτρωσεως.</p> <p>Do not grieve the Holy Spirit in God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [RSV]</p>
2 Cor. 1:21-22	<p>Ὁ δὲ βεβαιῶν ἡμᾶς σὺν ὑμῖν εἰς χριστὸν καὶ χριστὸς ἡμᾶς θεὸς, ὁ καὶ σφραγισάμενος ἡμᾶς καὶ δούς τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν.</p> <p>It is God who gives us, with you, a sure place in Christ and has both anointed us and marked us with his seal, giving us as pledge the Spirit in our hearts. [NJB]</p>

Table 1: Main New Testament texts concerning sealing and related concepts

Reference	Greek text and English translation (key parts in bold)
John 6:27	<p>Εργαζεσθε μη την βρωσιν την απολλυμενην αλλα την βρωσιν την μενουσαν εις ζωην αιωνιον, ην ο υιος του ανθρωπου υμιν δωσει: τουτον γαρ ο πατηρ εσφραγισεν ο θεος.</p> <p>Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you; for on him has God the Father set his seal.[RSV]</p>
Rom.4:11	<p>Και σημειον ελαβεν περιτομης, σφραγιδα της δικαιοσυνης της πιστεως της εν τη ακροβυστια...</p> <p>He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised... [RSV]</p>
Rev. 7:2-8	<p>Και ειδον αλλον αγγελον αναβαινοντα απο ανατολης ηλιου, εχοντα σφραγιδα θεου ζωντος, και εκραξεν φωνη μεγαλη τοις τεσσαρσιν αγγελοις οις εδοθη αυτοις αδικησαι την γην και την θαλασσαν Μη αδικησητε την γην μητε τα θαλασσαν μητε τα δενδρα αχρι σφραγισωμεν τους δουλους του θεου ημων επι των μετωπων αυτων. Και ηκουσα τον αριθμον των εσφραγισμενων, εκατον τεσσερακοντα εσσαρες χιλιαδες, εσφραγισμενοι εκ πασης φυλης υιων Ισραηλ— εκ φυλης Βενιαμιν δωδεκα χιλιαδες εσφραγισμενοι.</p> <p>Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising sun, with the seal of the living God; and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given the power to harm earth and sea, saying 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads.' And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel... twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Benjamin. [RSV]</p>
Rev. 9:4	<p>Και ερρεθη αυτοις ινα μη αδικησουσιν τον χορτον της γης ουδε παν χλωρον ουδε παν δενδρον, ει μη τους ανθρωπους οιτινες ουκ εχουσι την σφραγιδα του θεου επι των μετωπων.</p> <p>And they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those of mankind who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads. [RSV]</p>

Table 2: some secondary New Testament texts concerning sealing and related concepts

Reference	Greek text and English translation
1 Cor. 9:2	η γαρ σφραγίς μου της αποστολης υμεις εστε εν κυριω. for you are the seal of my apostolate in the Lord. [RSV]
2 Cor. 5:5	Ο δε κατεργασαμενος ημας εις αυτο τουτο θεος, ο δους ημιν τον αρραβωνα του πνευματος. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. [RSV]
2 Tim. 2:19	Ο μεντοι στερεος θεμελιος του θεου εστηκεν, εχων την σφραγιδα ταυτην: εγνω κυριος τους οντας αυτου, και, αποστητω απο αδικιας πας ο ονομαζων το ονομα κυριου. But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his', and, 'Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity. [RSV]
John 3:33	Ο λαβων αυτου την μαρτυριαν εσφραγισεν οτι ο θεος αληθης εστιν. He who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. [RSV]
Rev. 5:1 (cf. 5:2,5,9; 6:1, 3,7,9,12; 8:1)	και ειδον ... βιβλιον γεγραμμενον εσωθεν και οπισθεν, κατεσφραγισμενον σφραγισιν επτα.... And I saw... a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals... [RSV]
Rev. 10:4	Σφραγισον α ελαλησαν αι επτα βρονται, και μη αυτα γραψης. 'Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.' [RSV]
Rev. 14:1	...και μετ αυτου εκατον τεσσαρακοντα τεσσαρες χιλιαδες εχουσαι το ονομα αυτου και το ονομα του πατρος αυτου γεγραμμενον επι των μετωπων αυτων. ... and with him a hundred and forty four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. [RSV]
Rev. 20:3	και εβαλεν αυτον εις την αβυσσον και εκλεισεν και εσφραγισεν επανω αυτου And threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him... [RSV]
Rev. 22:10	Μη σφραγισης τους λογους της προφητειας του βιβλιου τουτου... 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy in this book...' [RSV]

Besides the crucial question whether there is any New Testament evidence of 'sealing' practices and, if so, how they related to rites of Christian baptism, further problems to be addressed include: how the use of 'sealing' in connection with anointing and circumcision

might have influenced the New Testament theology of baptism; and how far John's baptism, and Christian baptism, were influenced by existing Jewish ablutionary rites.²

Abbott-Smith translates σφραγίζω³ (in the Septuagint translating mainly ⁴) as 'to seal' whether for security', for 'concealment', 'for distinction' or 'for authentication.' Abbott-Smith recognises figurative and metaphorical uses of the verb, citing Romans 15:28 as a figurative use of the verb in the sense of sealing for security, Revelation 10:4 and 22:10 as metaphorical uses of the verb in the sense of sealing for concealment, and our key texts, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 1:22 as metaphorical uses of the verb in the sense of sealing for distinction. As an example of the literal use of sealing for distinction, Abbott-Smith cites the seals on the foreheads in Revelation 7:3-8; he takes the two examples in John (3:33 and 6:27) as literal uses of the verb in the sense of sealing for authentication.

Abbott-Smith translates σφραγίς as 'seal, signet' with reference to the 'seal of the living God' in Revelation 7:2 and as the 'impression' made by seal or signet. He takes the seal on the scrolls in Revelation 5, 6 and 8 as an example of the literal use of σφραγίς as impression. For the metaphorical use of σφραγίς Abbott-Smith cites Revelation 9:4 (even though he has taken the use of σφραγίζω in Revelation 7 as literal), and a range of Pauline examples (Romans 4:11, 1 Corinthians 9:2, 2 Timothy 2:19) where he might have brought out the meaning 'guarantee' and mentioned the connection with σημεῖον. He might also have made a cross reference to χαρακτήρ since although he explains this derives from χαρασσω ('to engrave') he

² The question of when Judaism began to practise proselyte baptism is taken to be unresolved, although it is likely that the practice became established after the time of Christ. Jean Daniélou (*The Theology of Jewish Christianity* London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964, p.316) argues that John's baptism was influenced by the eschatological image of living water and initiation rites in the Essene community.

³ Abbott-Smith, G. *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* Edinburgh: T.&T.Clark Ltd. 3rd Edn. 1995 p.435-436.

⁴ 'seal, affix, seal up' Brown, F. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* Oxford: Clarendon Press, no date, p.376.

translates the one occurrence in the New Testament (Hebrews 1:13) as 'stamp' or 'impress' ('as coin or seal'), used metaphorically.

It will be seen that the metaphorical use of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω, identified in the books of Ezekiel and Daniel (Ezekiel 9:4, Daniel 8:26, 12:4,9) recurs in the book of Revelation. Of the 16 New Testament occurrences of the noun and the 14 of the verb, relatively few are outside that book. Clearly Ephesians⁵ 1:13-14 and 4:30, and 2 Corinthians 1:22 are the key texts for an investigation of what it means to be 'sealed' with the Holy Spirit. In connection with these texts, the themes of identity, belonging, authentication and a down-payment on salvation (and hence the term ἀρραβών) need to be considered because they may have existed in Paul's mind, as in that of the author of Revelation. Romans 4:11 is also considered as it sees Abraham's circumcision as a 'sign' and a 'seal' of faith and may shed light on Pauline thought about σφραγίς and ἀρραβών.

Whilst it would be mistaken to ignore John 3:33 and 6:27 there is no evidence to suggest that John had a concept of sacramental seal, even if Paul did, despite the fact that John probably wrote later. However, John 6:27 may point us to the commissioning of Christ as priest, prophet and king and is often taken to refer to Christ's baptism although this cannot be proved with certainty. John 6:27 may even use 'seal' as an image of the gift of the Spirit, and may well shed light on the developing early Christian understanding of baptism, since the baptism of Christ forms the prototype of Christian baptism. Further, the concept of χαρακτήρ needs to be considered, as it could have been brought into the context of the 'seal of the Spirit' by post-New Testament theology. Clearly a network of ideas could have formed in the minds of

⁵ There is consensus among scholars that 2 Corinthians was written by Paul. Many see Ephesians, being more theologically developed, as being published later. Without judging this issue, we may take it as being representative of Pauline thought, especially Pauline thought as it was perceived by the Patristic Church, which accepted Ephesians as genuinely Pauline.

Christian theologians reflecting on the New Testament as a whole, enabling various concepts to be understood in greater depth.

With a clearer view of practices and influences within first century Christianity, the texts listed above can be understood more fully, and a richer meaning of the sacramental formula 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' can be established. Hence these findings stand to be of value to confirmation catechesis.

Σφραγίς in Paul's teaching

Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 21-22 are examined in relation to the wider corpus of teaching attributed to Paul to elicit how Paul makes use of the body of connections attached to σφραγίς and σφραγίζω to determine his association of 'sealing' with the gift of the Spirit. Similarly the network of concepts surrounding σφραγίς and σφραγίζω is examined with particular reference to Ephesians 1:13-14 to elicit exactly what Paul was teaching about the seal of the Spirit in relation to baptism, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the promise of future salvation indicated by the Christian sacraments. The Jewish theology of circumcision may also be a key area for establishing how σφραγίς and σφραγίζω were interpreted by Paul.

Lampe describes Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 21-22 as 'the natural starting point for a study of the conception of 'sealing' in the New Testament and the Fathers'.⁶ He emphasizes that 'sealing with the Spirit' is so closely connected to baptism as to be synonymous with it, explaining that the gift of the Spirit in Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30 refers to a specific moment of grace which is equated with the moment of baptism. For Lampe, the 'seal' refers to the moment of spiritual outpouring to the recipient of baptism, brought to effect by the sacramental words and action. Furthermore, Lampe holds that Paul maintains that the

⁶ Lampe, G.H.W. *The Seal of the Spirit* London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1951 p.3.

‘seal’ is more than an outward proof of baptism; it is an ‘inward’ mark of belonging on the soul of the recipient, marking God’s presence now and as a pledge on future salvation.

According to Lincoln,⁷ Lampe has refuted the connection seen by some older scholars⁸ between ‘being sealed with the Spirit’ and a rite of laying on of hands. Like other recent scholars, Lincoln discusses the more likely relationship between sealing and baptism, noting in favour of a connection that ‘reception of the Spirit was normally associated with water baptism, and that the term “seal” was used both of circumcision and its Christian counterpart, baptism,’ for which one can refer to Colossians 2:11. However, he points out that ‘evidence for explicit identification of circumcision and of baptism with a seal comes from the second century’, and that the *analogy* between circumcision does not make the meaning of the two rites identical. He prefers to see ‘sealing’ as a reference ‘to the actual reception of the Spirit,’ an event ‘usually accompanied by observable phenomena’ and not to be identified with water baptism even though the two are associated.⁹ Although he is more ready to see Paul relying on an existing idea that circumcision is a ‘seal’, Best, too, interprets Ephesians 1:13 as seeing ‘the divine aspect of becoming a Christian’ as lying ‘not in the act of baptism itself but in the coming of the Spirit to believers.’¹⁰ Barth also decides against the ‘seal’ referring to baptism, though he takes care to list evidence in favour of the identification before arguing that the ongoing visible work of the Spirit in the form of ministry, proclamation and praise is “God’s authentication of the Gentile converts” and that this is why Paul calls it a ‘seal’.¹¹

However, MacDonald mentions the possibility that Ephesians 1:3-14 echoes liturgical language used at baptisms, and the likelihood that in ‘1:3-14 as celebration of the identity of

⁷ Lincoln, Andrew T., *Ephesians* (Word Biblical Commentary 42). Dallas: Word Books, 1990, p. 39.

⁸ Such as Westcott, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 16.

⁹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 39-40.

¹⁰ Best, Ernest, *Ephesians* (ICC series), Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998, p. 150-151.

¹¹ Barth, Markus, *Ephesians 1-3* (Anchor Bible 34), New York: Doubleday, 1974, p. 135-143. His quotation is from Robinson, J.A., *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, 2nd ed., London: Clark, 1922, p. 35.

believers as those adopted by God... an appeal would be made to the rite... that most clearly established the boundaries of the community: baptism,' and concludes 'that it is highly likely that "sealing" is a way of describing baptism that highlights the powerful transformation of believers.' She refers to Romans 8:14-17 where 'reception of the Spirit and water baptism seem to merge completely.'¹² Muddiman judiciously observes that '[w]hile it is generally agreed that "sealing" is a metaphor for Christian assurance,' Paul (unlike Acts) does not make a distinction between the administration of baptism and the reception of the Spirit. Hence there is 'no reason to exclude a possible reference to baptism here as the moment of sealing and commitment.'¹³

Clearly Paul has a 'high theology' of baptism: he teaches that it includes symbolic washing accompanied by a profession of faith: 'washing of water with the word' (Eph.5:26) and teaches the baptismal imagery of dying with Jesus, in order to rise to new life with him (Rom. 6:3-6). Paul's use of the phrase 'baptized into Christ Jesus' (Rom. 6:3) and his analogy of baptism as having 'put on Christ' (Gal.3:27) connects baptism to belonging to Jesus. Thus baptism marks death to sin (Rom. 6:11) and rebirth in Jesus; putting on 'a new nature which is being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its creator' (Col. 3:10). For Paul, baptism means freedom from sin, belonging to Jesus through faith and a symbolic sharing in his death and resurrection, and a new life 'not under law, but under grace' (Rom. 6:14). It seems likely, then, that attempts to distinguish between the rite, on the one hand, and coming to faith, on the other, and to associate the gift of the Spirit with the latter as opposed to the former, and to associate sealing with visible gifts rather than a visible rite, make distinctions that have been important in later arguments among Christians, but are not true to Paul. He is more holistic. If

¹² MacDonald, Margaret Y., *Colossians and Ephesians* (Sacra Pagina 17), Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000, p. 212-214.

¹³ Muddiman, John, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Black's NT commentaries), London: Continuum, 2001, p. 79-80.

he knew of occasions when the Spirit was given before baptism was administered, it does not follow that he saw baptism as dispensable on such occasions, nor that he saw them as normative for the theology of baptism.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14 and 4:30 all make reference to Christian initiates being sealed with the Holy Spirit. A detailed examination of Ephesians 1:13-14 is appropriate here, since whether or not Ephesians is by Paul, it draws together themes that appear elsewhere in the Pauline corpus:

Εν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκουσάντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ ἐστὶν ἀρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολυτρώσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως, εἰς ἐπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.¹⁴

It is important to consider who has been sealed, and for what purpose, if we are to establish a full meaning for the phrase ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ.

As the sixth of the seven blessings with which the epistle to the Ephesians begins, ‘you also’ is directed to Gentile converts.¹⁵ By the time the epistle was written,¹⁶ debates over the need for circumcision were largely settled and Jewish Christians had begun to accept Gentile Christians into communion with them. Having fought hard to facilitate the acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles into what began as an essentially Jewish church, Paul now addresses the Gentiles, ‘you also’ in order to make it clear that the initiation of both groups is the same, and not dependent on circumcision. Furthermore, the inclusion of Gentiles into the early Church shows the universality of the Spirit’s work of redemption.

¹⁴ In him you also, who have heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:13-14, RSV).

¹⁵ MacDonald (*Colossians and Ephesians*, p. 203-204) argues for this with some hesitation, Barth (*Ephesians 1-3*, p. 92) more forcefully. Lincoln (*Ephesians*, p. 38) and Best (*Ephesians*, p. 148) argue against it.

¹⁶ Even if we take Ephesians to be Paul’s own work, as does Westcott (*Epistle to the Ephesians* p.xxiv) who considers it a later Pauline work, we are probably still right to date it significantly after the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, and some years after Galatians.

Ephesians 1:13 refers both to Christian initiation and the promise of salvation, delivered through the 'message of truth'. The 'message of truth, the gospel of your salvation' refers both to the good news of Christ preached to initiates and to his promise of eternal life; it is the same message described in Colossians 1:5 as the 'hope which is laid up for you in heaven'. That 'the message of truth' and the good news of salvation depend on the Holy Spirit becomes clear by reference to Paul's earlier epistles to the Thessalonians:

...he has chosen you; for our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (1 Thes: 1:4-5).

God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (2 Thes. 2:13).

Clearly 'gospel' means more than proclaimed good news and refers to the saving action of the Holy Spirit as a result of the death and resurrection of Christ.

It is only having 'heard' the good news of salvation and having believed in it, that initiates can be marked as belonging to Jesus. Abraham's circumcision as a sign of faith and complete acceptance of God's promise, and Jewish rites of initiation, in which sealing with circumcision follows instruction and acceptance of the faith, are probably reflected here. As Congar¹⁷ states, the Covenant promise made to Abraham is completed in the saving action of Christ through the cross, and made effective in the Church through the working of the Holy Spirit in whom Christians are sealed. Faith produces righteousness and, as circumcision is the external stamp of existing faith in God,¹⁸ so baptism is the coming to faith in God marked by the ratification of righteousness which prefigures sealing as a mark of authentication. Paul's words to the Ephesians exemplify how he provided strong links between the Old and New Covenants and between Jewish and Christian understanding of initiation. This typically Pauline use of known Jewish concepts as a peg on which to hang new Christian teaching is

¹⁷ Congar, Y. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: vol.1. The Experience of the Spirit*, London: Geoffrey Chapman 1983 p.30.

¹⁸ see also Rom. 4:11.

further exemplified in his description of the ‘seal’ of God’s ‘foundation’ in 2 Timothy 2:19. It is probable that the ‘foundation’ refers to the Church, although it could equally be a reference to Jesus himself. Either way the term ‘seal’ describes the same effect as a seal-ring would have been used to authorise an agreement. That the ‘seal’ described in this instance contains verses from Numbers 16:5, 26 and Isaiah 26:13 further exemplifies how Paul’s use of ‘seal’ images draws connections between pre-Christian and Christian teaching. 1 Corinthians 9:2: ‘for you are the seal of my apostolate in the Lord’ emphasizes further the image of ‘seal’ for ratification. Similarly, Romans 15:28: ‘when I have done this and given this harvest into their possession’ provides an example of σφραγίζω and επιτελέω used together to denote sealing for fulfilment or completion. Here Pauline thought appears to converge with John 6:27 although this is more likely to originate from a common understanding of the pre-Christian use of seal-rings than from John’s use of Paul as a source. Nonetheless, the different Johannine and Pauline contexts in which to interpret ‘sealing’ as authentication point to what it means to be sealed in a relationship with God through the gift of the Holy Spirit. John 3:33 and 6:27 ‘attest’¹⁹ to the truth of God the Father and God the Son respectively, while Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30 incorporate the Christian initiate’s responsibility for being ‘sealed’.

The interpretation of σφραγίς nurtured from its Jewish origins by Paul, into a universal Christian setting, is epitomised in the phrase ‘you have been stamped by the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise’[NJB]. The phrase ‘stamped with the seal’ perhaps explains εσφραγίσθητε more explicitly than the more literal translation ‘you also... were sealed’[RSV]. If εσφραγίσθητε is correctly translated as ‘stamped with the seal’ a mark or imprint is inferred. Westcott compares this to the seal on the foreheads of the 144,000, (Rev.7:3; 9:4) the seal of God’s foundation (2 Tim.2:19), the sign and guarantee of circumcision (Rom.4:11) and the

¹⁹ εσφραγισεν can be translated ‘is attesting’ (Jn.3:33 NJB).

seal of apostleship (1 Cor. 9:2).²⁰ Thus, the historical and theological strands of σφραγίς as branding with an indelible mark or circumcision are recalled and corresponding New Testament concepts and images are brought together in the context of initiatory practice. The catechetical usefulness for confirmation lies in images of σφραγίς as a mark of identity and authentication, a pledge of God's salvific promise and sign of participation in God's plan.

Westcott²¹ holds that the two ἐν ᾧ statements of Ephesians 1:13 are 'parallel', the first meaning 'in Christ' and the second 'in the Spirit'. They indicate respectively that the Gentiles are included in the Body of Christ, and have received the gift of the Spirit. He connects the first with the risen Christ breathing life into the Church (Jn.20:22) and with baptism, the second with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the laying on of hands which he holds took place following baptism. The Holy Spirit is depicted as the 'instrument with which believers are sealed' emphasizing that the gift of the 'promised Holy Spirit' is an active, transforming presence dwelling within the newly initiated Christian. Westcott compares Ephesians 1:13 with 4:30 and with Matthew 3:11 where the Spirit is rather 'the element, so to speak, in which [believers] are immersed.' This underlines the connection between σφραγίς and baptism. The interpretation of 'seal of the Spirit' remains consistent with the definition of σφραγίς as a signet or object that makes the seal, and unites the catechetical theme of the post-confirmation mission with those of identity and authentication, all in conformity to Christ. All this provides candidates with a scriptural reference point from which to consider the active presence of the Holy Spirit within their own lives, and feeds into the liturgical action of imposition of hands in the sacrament of confirmation.

Significantly, Paul connects 'sealed with the promised Holy Spirit' with its eschatological purpose. In a similar vein to the book of Revelation, Ephesians 1:13-14 expresses a three part

²⁰ 'Σφραγίς is used of a visible attestation of the reality of a spiritual fact.' Westcott *Epistle to the Ephesians* p.17

²¹ Westcott *Epistle to the Ephesians* p. 16-17.

chronology linking the seal of the Spirit to the promise made to Abraham in the past (cf. Heb. 11:9), God's promise of the Holy Spirit fulfilled at Pentecost and largely defining the baptismal experience of the early Church (Lk. 24:49; Jn.14:26; Acts 1:4; 2:33), and the promise of the future kingdom (Eph. 1:14; 4:30; Rev.22:4-5). The full meaning of 'sealed with the promised Holy Spirit' is therefore brought out by the phrase ο εστιν αραβών της κληρονομίας ημων.²² The key word αραβών identifies the 'seal of the Spirit' as the guarantee or down-payment on the promise of eternal life. Westcott states that the phrase demonstrates that the 'gift' (of the Spirit) is as yet incomplete because of human limitations but is a guarantee of what is to come.²³ Barth²⁴ discusses the textual problem (ο or ος) and agrees that the Spirit (not the act of sealing/baptizing) is the αραβών. Best remarks on the awkward conjunction of the metaphors 'first instalment' and 'inheritance', but agrees that 'the Spirit, not a portion of the Spirit,' is the first instalment of life in the world to come.²⁵

Αραβών connects the 'seal of the Spirit' to the baptismal promise of salvation for the individual and the hope of the fulfilment of God's kingdom. Congar²⁶ states that the promised 'inheritance is eschatological,' and he refers to 2 Corinthians 5:5: 'God who has given us his Spirit as a guarantee'. Paul reiterates the same message in an exhortation to the Ephesians to live as those 'sealed' in the life of Christ:

Και μη λυπειτε το πνευμα το αγιον του θεου, εν ω εσφραγισθητε εις ημεραν απολυτρωσεως.²⁷

The phrase εσφραγισθητε εις ημεραν απολυτρωσεως²⁸ indicates that σφραγίς is a sign of the guarantee of God's promised inheritance. We can now see parallels to Revelation 7:2 and

²² who is the guarantee of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14 RSV).

²³ Westcott *Epistle to the Ephesians* p.17.

²⁴ Barth *Ephesians 1-3*, p. 96-97, 140.

²⁵ Best *Ephesians*, p. 151-152.

²⁶ Congar, vol.1. *The Experience of the Spirit*, p.31.

²⁷ Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in whom you were sealed, for the day of your redemption (Eph. 4:30 RSV).

14:1 where the seal of the 144,000 is a metaphor for the protection of the entire Christian community for the day of judgement. Hence the sacrament of baptism is not just for Christian initiation in the present but points to eschatological fulfilment.

The connection between the 'seal', the gift of the Spirit, and a down-payment on salvation, is catechetically relevant, and can be reinforced by reference to Romans 4:11:

Και σημειον ελαβεν περιτομης, σφραγιδα της δικαιοσυνης της πιστεως της εν τη ακροβυστια...²⁹

Byrne³⁰ says that what is at stake in Romans 4:1-25 is 'the definition of God's eschatological people,' and that Paul 'is probably following a tradition that saw Abraham as... the archetypal convert from paganism.' Paul sees circumcision as a sign of the righteousness that is now universally available. Cranfield³¹ sees circumcision as an outward sign of the covenant, and 'as the seal, that is, the outward and visible authentication, ratification and guarantee, of the righteousness by faith,' and says it is quite probable 'that the custom of referring to circumcision as a seal was already well established in Judaism by Paul's time.' Dunn³² agrees with the latter point while admitting that 'the rabbinic parallels are later.' and recognises Paul's allusion to Genesis 17:11, but suggests he re-works the complex of ideas so that circumcision is the sign not so much of the covenant as of the righteousness through faith. Dunn also suggests that Paul sees the circumcision of the heart, the law written on the heart, and the new spirit,³³ as fulfilled in the gift and seal of the Spirit which is 'the eschatological equivalent to or fulfillment of circumcision.' Though Dunn is among those who hold it unlikely that the 'seal' is a reference to baptism as such, we may say that if baptism is the act

²⁸ you were sealed for the day of your redemption (Eph 4:30).

²⁹ He received circumcision as a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.... (RSV).

³⁰ Byrne, Brendan, S.J. *Romans* (Sacra Pagina 6), Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996, p.141-147.

³¹ Cranfield, C.E.B., *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC), vol.1, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975, p.236.

³² Dunn, James D.G., *Romans 1-8* (Word Biblical Commentary), Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988, p.209-210.

³³ Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:26, cf. Jubilees 1:23.

of coming to faith, then Romans 4:11 at least encourages the baptized to see themselves as entering into a faith in which they are sealed and indwelt by the Spirit as part of God's eschatological people who enjoy the universalised fulfilment of the covenant made to Abraham and of the circumcision that attested his faith.

To reinforce Paul's teaching on the eschatological seal, it is worth considering 2 Corinthians 5:5. 'ὁ δὸς ἡμῖν τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος' suggests a down-payment on salvation. Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 suggests the promise is ratified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

Ὁ δε βεβαιῶν ἡμᾶς σὺν ὑμῖν εἰς χριστὸν καὶ χρίσας ἡμᾶς θεός, ὁ καὶ σφραγισαμένος ἡμᾶς καὶ δὸς τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν.³⁴

These two verses connect sealing to initiation into the life of Christ, as a mark of belonging to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and as a promise of salvation. To be 'in Christ' is to be 'in the Spirit.' In the Pauline vocabulary of 'sealing' we see meanings associated with anointing, marking and ontological change which is a key point in the shift from the mark of circumcision to Christian sacramental anointing. It also gives credence to the connection seen by Westcott in Ephesians 1:13 of ἐσφργίσθητε to 'the experience of the individual with baptism as inclusion in the 'new Israel' and the laying on of hands'³⁵ to symbolize receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and the inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian community.³⁶

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the pledge of salvation is nonetheless conditional. Paul makes it abundantly clear that the gift of the Holy Spirit demands Spirit-led choices on the part of the recipient. Congar refers to ἀρραβών, as a 'guarantee or earnest-money' which is 'real

³⁴ It is God who gives us, with you, a sure place in Christ and has both anointed us and marked us with his seal, giving us as pledge the Spirit in our hearts (NJB).

³⁵ Westcott *Epistle to the Ephesians* p.16.

³⁶ The idea of a spiritual pledge, as a ratification of a down-payment on eternal life, was clearly taught by Paul prior to the epistle to the Ephesians, assuming 2 Corinthians 1:22 was written earlier.

and fruitful, so long as we make it bear fruit'.³⁷ Congar's interpretation typifies Paul's teaching on justification and his awareness of the human conflict between spiritual and carnal choices. 'The seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise'³⁸ describes the Christian neophyte's growing relationship with God through grace because of the way in which the action of spiritual sealing, and the metaphorical imprint it imparts, ratify the individual's commitment as well as God's guarantee of salvation. Thus the catechetical themes of 'sealing' as a down-payment on salvation, and the post-confirmation mission are integrated into a potential catechetical resource of ideas which relate the Christian's post-confirmation life in the Spirit to the hope of salvation. The relationship between the indwelling Spirit and the response of the 'sealed' Christian is further developed through Paul's teaching that the 'promised Holy Spirit' is alive and active in baptized individuals and in the Church as a whole.

Through being 'sealed', members receive the animating effects of the Spirit, enabling them to participate in the Church's mission to continue Christ's work of bringing about the Kingdom of God. The eschatological phrase of Ephesians 1:13-14: 'promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance,' can be related to Paul's teaching on the transforming effects of the Holy Spirit:

Now we have received not the Spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.³⁹

To Paul, the gift of the Spirit is the gift of God himself. Congar⁴⁰ describes the Spirit as 'the absolute gift, promised in fullness eschatologically, possessed as earnest-money in this present life', which sums up most succinctly Paul's teaching on being 'sealed with the promised Holy Spirit'. In describing *ὑπόβαθρον* as 'earnest money' with reference to Ephesians 1:14, Congar emphasizes Paul's connection between the resurrection of Christ and the saving activity of the

³⁷ Congar, vol. 1. *The Experience of the Spirit*, p.31.

³⁸ Eph. 1:13(NJB)

³⁹ 1 Cor. 2:12

⁴⁰ Congar, vol. 2 *Lord and Giver of Life* p.69.

Spirit as ‘the principle realizing the Christian mystery’.⁴¹ Kwon⁴² supports the argument that Paul identifies *ἁρραβών* with the Spirit, but he challenges the widely held view that *ἁρραβών* refers to a down-payment or *pars pro toto*. Kwon states that *ἁρραβών* is not a deposit on the whole that is yet to be realized but that it refers to God’s pledge of salvation and it must mean ‘pledge’ rather than ‘deposit’ because Paul does not identify the Spirit with partial fulfilment of salvation. However, by putting limits on its meaning, Kwon’s argument denies a full examination of *ἁρραβών* in relation to the resurrection of Christ and to Paul’s teaching that the baptized are conformed to Christ by sharing in his baptism and being anointed with the Spirit for the day of redemption.

In conclusion, Paul’s teaching on ‘sealing’ in Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, draws on a range of concepts of ‘sealing’ and relates sealing to *ἁρραβών*. Placed alongside Romans 4:11, it draws on Jewish roots to provide the beginnings of a universal Christian sacramental theology. Paul’s teaching prefigures and unifies the four catechetical themes. By receiving the seal of the Holy Spirit, initiates are marked by God the Father, who alone is holy, through the death and resurrection of God the Son, and through the action of the Holy Spirit, thus recalling the action of the Trinity in the baptism of Christ. Furthermore, in fulfilment of Paul’s teaching that circumcision is meaningful only insofar as it encompasses that which is ‘of the heart’ (Rom. 2:29), this change of heart is animated by the Holy Spirit dwelling within the ‘sealed’ initiate. The Holy Spirit thus inspires participation in the Kingdom of God now and marks the individual out for salvation at the end of time. These two concepts of the indwelling Spirit, most clearly depicted in Ephesians 1:13-14, draw on non-baptismal images of σφραγίς, σφραγίζω and ἁρραβών to enrich early baptismal theology through emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit.

⁴¹ Congar, vol. 2 *Lord and Giver of Life* p.68.

⁴² Kwon, Y-G. ‘*ἁρραβών* as Pledge in Second Corinthians’ *New Testament Studies* 54 (2008) p.525-541.

‘Sealing’ in the Gospel of John

Two verses in John’s gospel use the verb σφραγίζω. John 3:33, if not spoken by the Baptist, is at least in the context of his ‘attesting’ to Jesus as the Messiah and making a public ratification of his role, and recalls ‘sealing’ for identification. ‘For it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit’ (Jn. 3:34, RSV) shows the Spirit as a gift poured out by God on those he has chosen. If the NJB translation is correct, ‘for God gives him the Spirit without reserve,’ the emphasis is on the Father’s gift of the Spirit *to Jesus*. But from John 1:33 we already know that Jesus will hand on the Spirit.

John 6:27, τοῦτον γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἐσφράγισεν ὁ θεός,⁴³ is more important for this thesis. The Evangelist was likely to have drawn, deliberately or subconsciously, on the Old Testament understanding of being marked for protection, as well as meanings attached to anointing (e.g. David in 1 Sam. 16:13). The theme of ‘attesting’ in John 3:33 is also echoed: the Father’s seal authenticates the Son’s mission. Σφραγίζω is an image of both authority and authentication, such as Joseph received when he was given Pharaoh’s ring (Gen.41:42). Barrett claims that σφραγίζω is used in John 6:27 in the same way as it is used in John 3:33 to mean ‘accredit’⁴⁴. Whilst in John 3:33 the Christian’s acceptance of Jesus shows that he attests to God’s truth, in John 6:27 it is God who accredits Jesus.

Schnackenburg⁴⁵ claims that John 6:27 refers to salvation which suggests the ‘seal’ as an image of the gift of the Spirit, given by Christ to those who believe in him. Ridderbos⁴⁶ states that John 6:27 refers to the ‘character’ of salvation given by Christ but maintains that ‘sealing’ is unlikely to refer to Jesus’ baptism but is ‘rather the divine authorization of the Son of Man’.

⁴³ For on him has God the Father set his seal (Jn. 6:27 RSV).

⁴⁴ Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* p.189.

⁴⁵ Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Gospel according to St. John* (Vol. 2) London: Burns and Oates, 1980.

⁴⁶ Ridderbos, H.N. *The Gospel according to John: Theological Commentary*, Cambridge, 1997 p.225.

Maloney⁴⁷ concurs with 'divine authorization' by suggesting that John 6:27 refers to the moment that the Word became flesh (John 1:14).

Arguably Jesus' baptism is 'divine authorization' and the Father's seal refers to baptism, not only for now, but as preparation for the kingdom, and therefore essential to salvation. It suggests an understanding of the connection between baptism by rites of water and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is only otherwise described in the baptism of Jesus.

Barrett suggests that this 'act of sealing' be found specifically in the 'descent of the Spirit upon Jesus'.⁴⁸ Similarly, Bernard⁴⁹ claims that the use of the aorist εσφράγισεν denotes a critical moment in time, which in the case of John 6:27 is the Spirit's descent on Jesus which John the Baptist saw as God's ratification of Jesus' mission. Interpreted by Woodcock as being a reference to the 'seal of the Spirit', from the Father, which is the authentication that Jesus received at his baptism,⁵⁰ the use of σφραγίζω in John 6:27 reminds us of the revelation of Christ to John the Baptist. Woodcock connects John 6:27 to the Baptist's declaration in John 1:33, that he was told 'he on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit'. If this connection is accepted, then the phrase ἐσφράγισεν ὁ θεός in John 6:27 allows us to associate baptism with sealing by the Holy Spirit, and connect baptism by rites of water with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, provided we can see at least see an allusion in John to Christian baptism, based on the model of Jesus' own baptism, 'sealed' by the Father. Thus John's dramatic use of σφραγίζω brings an established Old Testament tradition of 'sealing' into the context of Christian initiation. This is not to say that John has a worked-out doctrine of the 'seal of the Spirit' as a sacramental seal.

⁴⁷ Maloney, F.J., S.D.B. *The Gospel of John*, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1988.

⁴⁸ Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* p.238.

⁴⁹ Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* p.191.

⁵⁰ Woodcock, E. 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (April-June 1998), p 145, cites Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* p. 238.

If Jesus' baptism by John (Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-34) provides the prototype for Christian baptism as well as being the revelation by the Father of the Son's identity and a ratification of his mission, then the themes of identity, belonging, ratification, mission and sealing by the Spirit can 'overflow' from Jesus' baptism to our own.

Lampe states that whilst those baptized by John were awaiting the Spirit, Jesus received the Spirit. By the association of baptismal water and the gift of the Spirit Jesus' baptism realized ancient prophetic imagery and Messianic hope; it enabled all those baptized in his name to receive the Spirit. Lampe equates the descent of the Spirit with the expression of the Sonship of Jesus, which included the 'seal' of the Father's authentication:

His possession of the Spirit, which fulfilled the traditional expectation of the Messiah, had as its immediate consequence the declaration and realization of His status as the Son of God.⁵¹

Lampe points out the permanence of the descent of the Spirit on Jesus which he describes as 'continuous and enduring' compared to the 'temporary and partial Spirit-possession of a prophet'.⁵² He states that the baptism of Jesus and Christian baptism are 'proleptic': Jesus was baptized to unify his entire mission into a single moment which was to be revealed over the course of his ministry, death, resurrection and ascension; Christian baptism brings together 'all the consequences of their faith-union with Christ' to be revealed gradually over time and fully understood at the Parousia. Furthermore, baptism is 'the sacrament of the bestowal of the Spirit'.⁵³ Lampe's interpretation supports the suggestion that John's σφραγίζω is more than a 'seal of approval' and that it sums up the Paschal Mystery of Christ and points to his future glory. It is a powerful interpretation, which provides a way to explain the implications of the theme of σφραγίς in baptismal catechesis, and in confirmation catechesis if we can extend the same theme to that.

⁵¹ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.35.

⁵² Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.35.

⁵³ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.45.

Concepts and Images of ‘Sealing’ in Revelation

In the book of Revelation, John draws on Old Testament sources and develops eschatological themes through a powerful use of imagery. It is widely accepted that John would have had access to both Hebrew and Greek source material which, in part, accounts for his concepts and uses of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω as an image for closure, prevention of access, secrecy, possession and protection. Because the symbolic style of Revelation presents groups of metaphors together as part of a wider allegorical message, the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω shall be considered in the context of John’s visionary experience⁵⁴ and the relation of the visions to the Christians of Asia Minor at the end of the first century. The books of Ezekiel and Daniel are considered as the main sources for ‘sealing’ in the book of Revelation; their interpretation of concepts and figurative uses of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω is recalled and Johannine developments considered. A significant metaphor centred on sealing is that of the sealed scroll (Rev.5:1), although an important central source of the ‘seal’ in Revelation is the imprint on Aaron’s *ephod* (Ex. 28:11, 36-38). The seal of the 144,000 (Rev.7:2, 3; 9:4; 14:1) is most relevant to building up a picture of the New Testament meanings of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω because it suggests a ‘mark’ or χαρακτήρ. Beale⁵⁵ describes Ezekiel as the ‘best background for divine sealing’ because it describes a mark to protect from harm, from demons and from loss of faith, which is developed in Revelation 7. Massynberde Ford⁵⁶ agrees that Ezekiel 9:4, 6 is ‘the most influential source’ on account of the sign of Hebrew *Tau* as a mark of salvation. The term σφραγίδα θεου ζωντος⁵⁷ introduces a different meaning from the seals by which the scroll was secured to that of divine authority, and also exemplifies John’s purpose of bringing images from scripture into the here and now to use them as figures to

⁵⁴ I was filled with the Spirit. (Rev.1:10 NJB). NB The visionary John is not taken to be the author (or implied author) of the Gospel of John.

⁵⁵ Beale, G.K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Carlisle: Paternoster 1999 p.409.

⁵⁶ Massynberde Ford, J. *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, New York: Doubleday and Company 1975.

⁵⁷ seal of the living God (Rev. 7:2 RSV).

explain present and future times. Beale⁵⁸ states that the seal is 'from the living God' who bestows eternal life and connects it to receiving a 'future inheritance'. Hence Revelation 7:2 points to the future and provides a further connection between σφραγίς and ἀρραβών.

With similar apocalyptic symbolism to the visions in Ezekiel 1 and 10, and the sealed book of Daniel 12:4, John's prophetic vision of a scroll with seven seals in Revelation 5:1-2 refers to sealing for closure with the purpose to prevent access until the appropriate time. In contrast to Daniel's sealed book in which the secret words were to remain hidden, John emphasizes that the future time is already at hand by his call for the one who would be worthy to open the seals. That there were seven seals⁵⁹ and that only Jesus himself, represented in the figure of the Lamb, was worthy to break the seals, emphasizes the importance attached to σφραγίς; it is the seal of God's authority to prevent access to the most sacred of secrets. John's eschatology centres on the message that the time has now arrived to unlock the hidden secrets of the book alluded to by Daniel. Thus, the image of the seal pervades the three-tiered chronology of Revelation: language and imagery drawing on the Old Testament Apocalypse, Isaiah and the Wisdom literature; figurative representation of the contemporary situation⁶⁰ and the eschatological events that follow the opening of the seven seals.

In contrast, the prediction of the end of time which falls between the sixth and seventh trumpets (Rev. 10:1-11) is accompanied by the instruction to keep the words of the seven thunderclaps sealed. This is consistent with early apocalyptic images of Daniel's book (Dan. 8:26; 12:4, 9), but the sense in which the time has not yet come is different. The imminence of the predicted judgement is emphasized by the phrase 'The time of waiting is over' and the connection of the coming of the kingdom with the sound of the seventh trumpet

⁵⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation* p.415.

⁵⁹ The number 7 is a repeated motif in Revelation as a figure for holiness.

⁶⁰ Such as the beast as an image for Roman oppression (Rev. 16:10).

(Rev.10:7). The 'seal' described here for closure for the purpose of maintaining secrecy, a concept which is also emphasized in the angel's dialogue with John regarding the visions in their totality:

Καὶ λέγει μοι, Μὴ σφραγίσῃς τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου, ὁ καιρὸς γὰρ ἐγγύς ἐστιν.⁶¹

Thus the visions disclosed to John were to be made accessible to the Christian community.

Just as John's figurative use of σφραγίζω here represents secrecy by the prevention of access to God's revelation, the breaking of seals and the final instruction to keep prophecies unsealed represents a need and urgency for communication of their message. As a result the early Christian community shall make more sense of their present oppression by Rome and come to a fuller understanding of the future kingdom of God.

Figurative language following the sixth seal draws on imagery from Ezekiel 9:4 and the mark of the Lamb's blood on the Israelites' doorposts (Ex. 12:7-14) to emphasize σφραγίς as a divine mark of protection against God's retribution (Rev. 7:2,3). The term σφραγίδα θεοῦ ζωντος⁶² introduces a different meaning from the seals by which the scroll was secured to that of divine authority, and also exemplifies John's purpose of bringing images from scripture into the here and now to use them as figures to explain present and future times. The 144,000 were marked with a seal for identification and protection at the Parousia which contributes to a later understanding, bringing the sense of being permanently marked to the body of ideas that later formed the *χαρακτηρ* of confirmation. Furthermore, a sense of urgency is implied for the realisation of divine judgement is approaching. Filho points out that the whole account of sealing the foreheads of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:1-17) interrupts the opening of the seven seals

⁶¹ 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy in this book for the time is near.' (Rev. 22:10 RSV).

⁶² Seal of the living God (Rev. 7:2 RSV).

and thereby emphasizes 'the protection given to persecuted Christians'⁶³ and the justice of God's judgement on a corrupt world. There is a clear message of God's promise for the early Christian community, that he will protect those who belong to him and are marked with his seal in accounts of the sealing of the 144,000 and repeated in the judgement of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:4). Revelation 14:1 refers to the 144,000 on Mount Zion who were recognisable by the name of the Lamb and the Father on their foreheads which suggests that the 'seal of the living God' was connected with the name of God and may have been a visible seal. Lampe⁶⁴ suggests that there is a reference to the sign of the cross in baptism in relation to the idea of a physical mark in Revelation 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4 which he describes as an early reference to the seal as a sign of the cross and interprets as a forerunner of the baptismal concept of the spiritual seal. Moreover, Lampe maintains that the theme of the name as a distinguishing mark and protection is reflected in Revelation 14:1: '..... and with him a hundred and forty four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads'. Lampe's interpretation suggests that this text echoes Yahweh's protection of the remnant of the House of Judah (2 Kg. 19:30-31) and reveals the dual role of the name, to identify and protect. It suggests that John's use of the name as an echo of Yahweh's protection of the chosen remnant indicates: 'those who are left in Israel will take refuge in the Name of Yahweh' (Zeph.3:15).

Woodcock describes the seal as 'observable' with reference to Seiss, but also cites Ladd who maintains that the seal was spiritual.⁶⁵ Woodcock likens this seal to the imprint of a signet to ratify documents, emphasizing God's authority. Woodcock's hypothesis supports Lampe and

⁶³ Filho, J.A. 'The Apocalypse of John as an Account of a Visionary Experience: Notes on the Book's Structure' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 25.2, (2002), p.222.

⁶⁴ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*.

⁶⁵ Woodcock, E., 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit' p.147, cites Seiss, J.A. *The Apocalypse*, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, n.d. p.164 and Ladd, G.E. *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, U.S.A: Eerdmans, 1972 p.112.

his interpretation as the 'seal of the living God' as a literal seal associated with the sign of *Tau*.

Beale argues that although the 'seal' is to be identified with the Name of Jesus and God, the figurative 144,000 refers not just to the remnant of Israel but to the 'redeemed remnant from all over the earth'.⁶⁶ Aune⁶⁷ states that this 'remnant' comprises a group of Christians, male and female, of all ages and from across the world, who have been designated for eschatological protection and survival. In the same way as Beale, Aune's remnant refers to a vast multitude that can only be numbered symbolically, and is fully inclusive.

Based on Daniel 3-7, 144,000 is an image for the Church on the understanding that God extends his 'seal' to all believers. Beale's argument is based on the premise that it would be inconsistent with the rest of John and the New Testament to consider the 144,000 as an exclusive Jewish remnant, but that as a metaphor for all believers it is compatible with the way that the term δούλος (servant) is used to refer to the whole community. The outcome is nonetheless the same as that for Ezekiel's remnant. The effects of being 'sealed' are that the community is protected in its faith, empowered to witness to Jesus and strengthened to stay close to him in times of difficulty. Beale's argument demonstrates a strong connection between the outcomes of 'sealing' in Revelation and the four catechetical themes of sealing. Beale states that those who have been 'sealed' are 'predestined',⁶⁸ by which he means that they are protected in their faith for the day of judgement which suggests the catechetical theme of a down-payment on salvation:

⁶⁶ Beale, *The Book of Revelation* p.413.

⁶⁷ Aune, David, E. *World Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 52B Revelation 6-16, USA: Thomas Nelson 1998.

⁶⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p.415.

In the light of the broader theology of the New Testament, the 'seal' may best be identified with the Holy Spirit, since the seal primarily connotes a guarantee of spiritual protection.⁶⁹

In addition to the 'seal' as a mark of identity for the salvation of individual members of the community of God, the use of 'name' in Revelation 22:4 identifies the name of God with the beatific vision prefigured in Psalm 17, points to the future realization of the Kingdom of God and ratifies the eschatological purpose of the 'seal' as an identifying mark of the elect and their protection for the final judgement. Beale agrees with Daniélou⁷⁰ that the apocalyptic origins of the 'seal' of the 144,000 lie in the 'cross' on the foreheads of those who were to be protected in Ezekiel's prophecy (Ezek 9:6), and suggests that the connection between the 'seal of the living God' and salvation can only be understood in the context of Jewish understanding that the mark of *Tau* was that of the divine Name. It is this association of *Tau* with the cruciform cross or X which may have enabled the 'seal' from Ezekiel to become identified with the name of God.⁷¹ It is probable that during the early Christian era any association of the mark of *Tau* as a sign of the name of God would have been replaced by the Greek association of the sign X as the first letter for Χριστός, thus changing the association from the name of God to the name of Christ, and applied to baptism as evidenced in the Acts of the Apostles 2:38.

Consistency with John's figurative style and Beale's identification of the 144,000 with the entire redeemed community supports the view that the seal was spiritual rather than visible, but that its purpose to mark those who belong to God for possession and protection implies a liturgical action as a sign of being marked for salvation:

⁶⁹ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p.415.

⁷⁰ Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964. p.154.

⁷¹ There is no evidence that signing with a *Tau* or cross, or baptismal anointing took place before AD 70. The *Didache* published around AD 80-100 refers to baptism in the three fold name. Anointing was introduced during the third century at the earliest.

By means of his seal God will identify the people whom he will protect from the disasters predicted for the Tribulation.⁷²

The 'seal of the living God' is eschatological, but the extent to which it might be baptismal is difficult to prove beyond conjecture. John's concept of the seal as a mark of divine protection is identified by Beale and Woodcock as revealing a similarity to Pauline teaching on being sealed with the Holy Spirit. Beale specifies that the parity is between the 'seal' represented in Revelation 7:2 and 14:1, and that of Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 1:22, although he points out that unlike Paul, John never explicitly states the 'seal' as a figure of the Holy Spirit. Woodcock justifies the connection by likening God's seal of protection to a guarantee of salvation.

By means of sealing as a mark of God's authority to save his people, a strong element of hope is brought into the series of disasters foretold in Revelation. This hope is further ratified by the vision of the angel throwing Satan into the *αβυσσος* or realm of the dead in Revelation 20:3. That the entrance to the abyss is sealed shows sealing for literal closure as understood in Dan. 6:18 and Matthew 27:66. but in this instance the sealing 'for a thousand years' demonstrates sealing for a fixed term, until the Day of Judgement. Furthermore in the same style as the breaking of the seven seals on the scroll resulted in a series of eschatological disasters, the opening of the sealed abyss at the end of time results in Satan's ultimate destruction. As the seals on the scrolls result in judgement on the world, in contrast, the opening of the sealed abyss demonstrates God's victory over Satan.

It can be concluded that John and the early Christian community of Asia Minor understood being sealed as belonging to God for the purposes of protection. This provided empowerment in the present time and a down-payment on future salvation. It is consistent with John's three part chronology that the 144,000 who were sealed as belonging to God can be identified with

⁷² Woodcock, E. 'The Seal of the Holy Spirit' p.147.

the whole Christian community past, present and the people of the ‘new Jerusalem’ (Rev. 21:2) at the coming of the Kingdom.

The figurative seals used by John, although distinct, are connected to each other in meaning and purpose. Furthermore, by these conceptual connections, John is able to bring together different metaphors into a wider allegorical interpretation of his visionary experience, drawing on pre-Christian concepts of the seal and the name of God. It is both the concepts of sealing taught by John and the effects of unsealing that which has been sealed for a particular purpose which unleashes dramatic and transforming effects for the early Christian community. Two salient outcomes for early Christian understanding are the exhortation to John to spread the message of his visions and not to keep them sealed and the present protection and future salvific guarantee of those sealed on the forehead in the name of God. These two outcomes contribute to a full understanding of what it means for the Christian community to ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’ to strengthen them for their mission to continue Jesus’ ministry of bringing about the Kingdom of God and the pledge of their future salvation. The interdependence between σφραγίς and ἀρραβών, demonstrated in a scriptural setting, provides a catechetical context for learning and teaching about ‘be sealed’ in confirmation within which the Pauline ‘seal of the Spirit’ can be used to further sacramental understanding.

Baptism and the Spirit’s Indwelling in the New Testament

The Pauline and Johannine texts considered above, which it has been argued connect or even identify sealing with baptism, should be placed within a broader view of baptism during New Testament times. Jewish ablutionary rites are examined as possibly providing a background of understanding within which John the Baptist and Jesus carried out their ministry. The baptism of Christ, and his own practice and interpretation of baptism, are considered as the foundation of Christian baptismal rites. The Pentecost event and the other evidence in the Acts of the

Apostles are important for our theme. Images of the Spirit complement what has been said above about the Spirit as σφραγίς and ἀρραβών.

Mark 7:4, Matthew 15:2 and Luke 11:38 are evidence that Jewish converts to Christianity would have been familiar with ritual washing associated with purity. The gospels refer to ablutions associated with eating, in which the concept of physical washing as both a sign of spiritual purity and transition from one state to another is also present. One rite of washing for transition, 'proselyte baptism,'⁷³ may well have developed later. It is difficult to prove whether Jewish rites of initiation were influenced by Christian practice, or *vice versa*, and to what extent. Similarities in practice which can be drawn between Jewish proselyte baptism, pre-paschal baptism by John and post-paschal Christian baptism show that ablutionary rites were well known to the early Judeo-Christian community, but do not provide a complete prototype for Christian baptism:

On the matter of practice, New Testament evidence linking Christian Baptism to proselyte baptism is not only lacking, but what evidence there is points instead towards Jesus' own baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan as the prototype of Christian practice.⁷⁴

Kavanagh considers two viewpoints. He states that 'the body of teaching centring on proselyte baptism would have provided a significantly rich repertoire of images and procedures for the earliest Christian baptismal catecheses'⁷⁵ and would have included rites of washing for purification. However he also quotes Nils Dahl to argue that the 'pattern of Old Testament initiation of priests' has a much greater influence on early Christian rites of initiation than do

⁷³ Neunheuser, B. *Baptism and Confirmation*, London: Burns and Oates, 1964, p.8. Neunheuser uses 'proselyte baptism' to describe the rite of initiation 'into the Synagogue'. Daniélou suggests that the baptism described in the *Didache* 'imitated' Jewish proselyte baptism. Neunheuser and Daniélou agree that John's baptism reflects known Jewish rites which may include those used by the Essene community. See Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, p.316.

⁷⁴ Kavanagh, A. *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1978, p.10.

⁷⁵ Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism* p.11.

Jewish proselyte rites.⁷⁶ Kavanagh's arguments illustrate the importance of the ancient tradition of Jewish ablutionary rites and highlight the importance of resisting the temptation to Christianize Jewish thinking for the convenience of equating proselyte baptism with Christian baptism. Such an equation cannot be proved, but neither can the Jewish ablutionary tradition be ignored.

Whether or not proselyte baptism was practised in New Testament times, the association of circumcision with covenant discussed in the previous chapter would have been well understood by New Testament writers. Lampe states that circumcision was the most significant part of Jewish rites of initiation, describing it as the 'vitally important ceremony of entry into the Covenant' which 'constituted the 'seal' upon the people of God.'⁷⁷ Acts 7:8 refers to Abraham's 'covenant of circumcision'. That circumcision was not a pre-requisite to baptism is made clear in Peter's baptism of the first Gentiles in Acts 10:45 although debates amongst the early Christian community about contact with 'the uncircumcised' (Acts 11:3) and about whether salvation was possible without circumcision (Acts 15:1,5; 21:21) continued for some time, demonstrating both the priority given by some Jewish Christians to the practice of existing rites of initiation and the connection between circumcision as a covenant with God and belonging to God. Furthermore, it is arguable that later rites of 'sealing' with the sign of X⁷⁸ in Christian baptism rely on a connection between the physical mark of circumcision, and association of *Tau* with the Hebrew *Emeth* (truth) and the name of God. Circumcision, though little mentioned in the non-Pauline New Testament, may have contributed to how the Christian community would have understood a physical mark or sign of initiation. However, for the New Testament circumcision was not merely replaced by baptism. Circumcision was an external rite which did not have an internal, sacramental effect whereas baptism surpasses it in

⁷⁶ Dahl, N. quoted by Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism* p.31.

⁷⁷ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.83.

⁷⁸ The Greek *chi* as the initial letter for Christ.

that the external rite is intrinsically bound to the inward effect of grace. Herein lies the key difference between the ‘seal’ of circumcision of Romans 4:11 and the Pauline sacramental ‘seal’ of the Spirit.

John the Baptist’s understanding that his water baptism (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:26) was to be replaced by Jesus’ baptism in the Spirit is a theme evidenced in all four gospels. The symbolism of water to wash away sin was a familiar part of the background of New Testament thought and is reflected in John’s water baptism. It is clear that this was a baptism of repentance: ‘they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins’ (Mk. 1:5). John’s baptism included immersion and was conferred on adults who were willing to repent. Baptismal washing and repentance had the purpose of transition from a state of sin to one of readiness to receive the expected Messiah. Herein lies the key point which sets John’s βάπτισμα apart from Jewish rites of βάπτισμος: the raised eschatological awareness. An evolution of baptismal practice is evident here with growing emphasis on the Spirit baptism which is to come. Hence the New Testament uses the neuter term βάπτισμα to distinguish John’s baptism, and early Christian baptismal practice, from Jewish (and pagan) ritual washing, which was called by the masculine form βάπτισμος. The implication seems to be that Christian baptism, somehow prepared for by John’s baptism, supersedes religious ablutions and provides something new and spiritually significant.

John the Baptist predicted that the Messiah would baptize with fire, possibly as a means of divine judgement (Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16). Matthew and Luke refer to fire in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, perhaps to represent the powerful, purifying effects of Spirit baptism (cf. Lk. 12:49). O’Neill cautions against assuming Mk. 1:8 (‘he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit’) to be the original of the saying, and suggests that the word ‘fire’ was possibly omitted from the

Marcan version by an editor, and replaced with 'Holy Spirit'.⁷⁹ He believes the term 'fire' was preserved from an earlier version by Matthew and Luke, who added 'Holy Spirit'. O'Neill's suggestion illustrates the scholarly discussion that exists about fire and water as images for baptism but it is unlikely that his conjecture can be firmly proved. It is nonetheless possible that the earliest version of the Baptist's saying did refer to baptism with both Spirit and fire, suggesting 'the Holy Spirit and fire' were synonymous and that he associated the expected Messiah with images of cleansing, purifying and destruction, perhaps with Mal. 3:19 in mind. O'Neill states that the connection between water and fire as images of purification and destruction would have been well known in Jewish thought by New Testament times. He makes the conjecture that by the time of John's ministry there was already an expectation that God would save his people from destruction using the medium of water and fire.⁸⁰ O'Neill grounds images of the Spirit as water and fire in the Old Testament⁸¹ and Midrash, to justify this theory. He draws on Old Testament images of water and fire with reference to the pillar of fire and cloud, and concludes that by saying he was baptizing with water, John the Baptist was inferring that this was 'in the power of the Holy Spirit' which he had been given as a prophet, but that Jesus would baptize with 'fire and the Spirit in the power of the Spirit which he would naturally have'. O'Neill emphasizes that John the Baptist expected Jesus to bring a more destructive baptism in the sense of judgement for the unrepentant.

However, there is no gospel evidence to suggest that those who had been baptized with water by John were re-baptized in the Spirit. Jesus did not in fact abolish water baptism but himself (arguably) continued to baptize with water (Jn. 3:22) and encouraged his disciples to continue the practice; the statement in John 4:2 that baptism was performed by the disciples and not by

⁷⁹ O'Neill, J.C. 'The Connection between Baptism and the Gift of the Spirit in Acts', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 63, (1996) p. 88.

⁸⁰ O'Neill, J.C. 'The Connection between Baptism and the Gift of the Spirit in Acts', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 63, (1996) p. 91.

⁸¹ E.g. Ex. 13:21,22; Isa. 4:4.

Jesus is interpreted by Bernard as an 'editor's correction'.⁸² There is a wealth of eschatological prophecy to support the tradition of 'living water' which has taken its place in Christian baptismal imagery.⁸³ By referring to rebirth 'through water and the Spirit', Jesus appears to describe baptism with water as a symbol of the Spirit.⁸⁴

Johannine imagery of the Holy Spirit as *ruach* (breath, wind, Jn. 3:8), as παρακλητος (*Paraclete*, counsellor, Jn. 14:16,26) and as 'Spirit of Truth' (Jn. 14:16;15:26) differentiates Christian baptism from other ablutions, by suggesting that the symbolic immersion in water for repentance, which typified Jewish proselyte baptism and the baptism of John, has been replaced by forgiveness, and influences later Christian teaching on baptism which brings out the transforming effects of the outpouring of the Spirit. Demonstrated at the baptism of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the transforming effect of the Holy Spirit is central to marking the difference between Christian baptism, and Jewish rites and concepts such as the messianic hope of a warrior liberator. The use of images of wind, Paraclete and Spirit of Truth implies that the Evangelist's understanding might have been shaped by having experienced Pentecost, and as the fulfilment of Christ's promise that the Paraclete would come 'whom the Father will send in my name' and of the Baptist's prediction that Spirit baptism was still to come.

While only John's Gospel attributes pre-resurrection teaching on baptism to Jesus, Luke portrays Jesus in 4:18 as reading from the book of Isaiah (Isa. 61:1). Jesus' implied claim to be anointed as a prophet and indwelt by the Spirit can contribute to a theology of initiation in which the recipient, conformed to Christ, has been marked out for a particular purpose. Isaiah

⁸² Bernard, J.H. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to John* Vol.1 Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1985 p.127.

⁸³ Song of Songs 4:15; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Zech. 14:8, see also Jn. 7:37.

⁸⁴ Also Jn. 7:37-39.

61:1-4, 6, 8-9 and Luke 4:16-22 were chosen as the readings for the Chrism Mass in 1966, indicating the Church's concern to associate these texts with confirmation.⁸⁵

Jesus' own post-resurrection teaching, as reported in the Gospels and Acts, explained baptism, repentance, forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit is mentioned implicitly in Luke 24:49, explicitly in Acts 1:4-5, and associated with concepts we have connected with 'sealing' when Jesus authorises the mission of the apostles by breathing on them with the words 'Receive the Holy Spirit' in John 20:22. Here the image of life giving breath expresses the transforming effects of the Spirit. It recalls the Spirit of renewal from Genesis 1; 2; 2:7, Wisdom 15:11 and Ezekiel 37:9, uniting ancient concepts of the Spirit with the image of the breath of Jesus as the Spirit given to the disciples for renewal and mission. The image of the Spirit here is arguably a pre-cursor to the events of Pentecost.

The Trinitarian baptismal formula stands alone in Matthew 28:19. 'Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' This may not have been intended as a direct quotation, but as a summary of Jesus' post-resurrection teaching on baptism. These words suggest that there was an understanding that baptism was Trinitarian by the time Matthew's Gospel was written, or that the words are an example of Christian liturgy. They represent a change in baptismal practice from John's water baptism to baptism into the Trinity, and, presented as an instruction from Jesus to the Church, clearly identify baptism as a distinctly Christian practice set apart from Jewish baptismal rites. The emphasis on the 'name' provides a connection between Matthew's Trinitarian baptismal formula and concepts surrounding 'sealing', because it recalls earlier

⁸⁵ *The New Order of Holy Week*, London: Burns & Oates, 1966, p. 106-111. In the revised liturgy of Holy Week of 1955 the readings had focused on the Anointing of the Sick; in the missal of 1969, the theme of the ministerial, ordained priesthood was added to the Chrism Mass.

Jewish association between the 'seal' and the Name of God which became subsumed into early Christian association with the sign of the cross⁸⁶ and the name of Christ.

Whilst the terms σφραγίς and σφραγίζω are not used in the Acts of the Apostles, there is a wealth of data about baptism and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which contributes to our understanding of early Christian baptism and its perceived connection with the gift of the Spirit. The following investigation into the connection between baptism and the gift of the Spirit in Acts, therefore, aims to outline Luke's presentation of early Christian practice and themes such as the laying on of hands which became attached to concepts of 'sealing' in later Christian liturgy.

Acts is clearly centred on the activity of the Spirit to empower the early Church, though Lampe tends to emphasize the differences between Luke's and Paul's understanding of baptism,⁸⁷ adding a seemingly negative criticism that Luke has 'little appreciation of the Spirit as personal'.⁸⁸ This is balanced by Lampe's more positive approach to Luke's understanding of the connection between joy and the gift of the Spirit.⁸⁹ Arguably, the latter demonstrates how Luke contributes positively to an understanding of how the Spirit is 'personal' and helps explain the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The culmination of all gospel proclamation that Jesus has been exalted, and has imparted the Spirit at Pentecost, is recorded in Acts 2:32-33:

God raised this man Jesus to life, and of that we are all witnesses. Now raised to the heights by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit.

⁸⁶ Signing with the cross was not part of baptismal rites at the time of Christ but may have been established by the time the Gospel of Matthew was written.

⁸⁷ Whether Luke did accompany Paul on any of his journeys, had access to Paul's letters, or to what extent he used and edited Aramaic source material, cannot be proved beyond conjecture.

⁸⁸ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.53.

⁸⁹ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.65.

Peter's words bring Pentecostal representations of the Holy Spirit as wind and tongues of fire into the context of the inseparable action of the Trinity as a clear fulfilment of God's promise to send a Paraclete. The concept of the Holy Spirit as promised gift is established in Peter's speech in fulfilment of prophecy.⁹⁰ The concept of the Holy Spirit as fulfilment may suggest Ezekiel's metaphorical seal as the epitome of perfection (Ezek. 28:12), and the picture of spiritual renewal from within may refer back to Ezekiel 36:26-27:

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

Furthermore, by grounding his words in a scriptural context, Peter provides a bridge from Old Testament prophecy to provide an explanation of the events of Pentecost as the fulfilment of Jesus' promise that God would send his Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the single event which draws together all pre-existing concepts, uses and images of the Holy Spirit, baptism by water and the anticipation of Spirit baptism into an active presence of the Holy Spirit within the Church, the gift by which Christians are given a new life in Jesus and promise of salvation. This renewed awareness of the gift of the Holy Spirit as an active presence in the Church is marked, throughout the Acts of the Apostles, by a new focus on baptism for forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit, although the rite and the gift do not always occur at the same time.

Kavanagh suggests that the sequence of initiation in Acts 2 was the experience 'of the Pentecostal community itself'⁹¹ which demonstrates that the Spirit was understood to be received in water baptism rather than after it. Kavanagh points out that the order of preaching, baptism and the gift of the Spirit was likely to have been added by later editors, but that the

⁹⁰ Peter's speech refers in particular to Jl. 3:1-5 to explain the 'outpouring of the Spirit' as the fulfilment of prophecy to a predominately Jewish audience.

⁹¹ Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism* p.16.

events of Pentecost had a 'profound influence'⁹² on the manner in which evangelists would later interpret Jesus' baptism by John. Peter's instructions to his hearers on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38 to repent and 'be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ' in order to be forgiven and to 'receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' provide an outline for post-paschal baptism, although not necessarily a formula. Whether the call to repentance and forgiveness formed part of the rites of baptism in the early Church or preceded them is unproven, but clearly repentance was at least a pre-requisite for baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁹³ The effects of baptism suggested here are forgiveness, adoption into the life of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter's instruction implies that baptism in the name of Christ marks recipients as belonging to Jesus and imprints the gift of the Spirit on them. With reference to Joel 1:3-5, Peter demonstrates that the gift of the Spirit is eschatological; the imprint of the Spirit now is part of what will be poured out at the end of time.

The case of the Samaritans in Acts 8:16 is significant for our purpose. The imposition of hands by Peter and John, accompanied by *epiclesis*, resulted in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. It was understood that these people had not previously received the Holy Spirit because 'they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus'. Luke seems to imply that being baptized 'only' in the name of the Lord Jesus means the Spirit is still to come. Lampe rightly emphasizes the significance of baptism for the gift of the Spirit, but does not elaborate on the possibility that baptism might be transitional, as in Acts 8:16, with the completeness of the gift of the Spirit still to come. Lampe perhaps overstates his case when he says that 'nowhere does the New Testament imply that some Christians possess the Spirit while others do not'.⁹⁴ He claims that the Spirit is given at baptism but does not really envisage that the Spirit can somehow be given later, or at least given again so as to become a more intense presence.

⁹² Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism* p.17.

⁹³ Luke re-iterates the need to repent in Peter's words in Acts 3:19-20.

⁹⁴ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.47.

Lampe suggests that the imposition of hands such as that in Acts 8:17 marks decisive moments in the extension of the Church's apostolicity although he confines the community expressed by this action to 'apostolic men'⁹⁵ which seems to exclude an early commissioning of bishops, priests and deacons. The case of the Samaritans implies that the gift of the Holy Spirit was seen in this instance as an addition to baptism that had already taken place, rather than a replacement for it. Moreover, it suggests that the action of laying hands 'seals' or authenticates the preceding baptism, although this evidence alone is insufficient to draw conclusions on the relation between the laying on of hands and the gift of the Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles. So the imposition of hands to seal or attest to the gift of the Holy Spirit is indicated in Acts 8:17, 19 (cf. 9:17) but there is insufficient evidence to prove that the laying on of hands took place as an automatic part of baptismal rites before AD 70, still less an anointing or signing with a *Tau* or cross.

The laying on of hands accompanied by prayer had taken place for the institution of the Seven in Acts 6:2-6. There is no direct relation here to the gift of the Spirit, as it is already stated that these seven men were 'full of the Spirit and of wisdom' (Acts 6:3), so it is reasonable to assume that the prayer was not a prayer of *epiclesis*, and that the purpose of laying on of hands was that of commissioning them for their role. Lampe claims that the imposition of hands on the Seven 'does not convey the gift of the Spirit in the baptismal sense'⁹⁶ because they had already received the Spirit. It does, nonetheless, recall the ancient purpose of sealing to mark an individual for a particular role, and as such supports the connection between the action of imposition of hands and concepts of sealing.

The evidence so far suggests the imposition of hands for the bestowal of the gift of the Spirit may have followed baptism in a fairly regular way, but that there is no mention either in

⁹⁵ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.76.

⁹⁶ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.74.

Peter's instructions on the Day of Pentecost, or in the account to be discussed below, of the imposition of hands to impart the gift of the Spirit suggests that Christian baptism was not deemed to depend on this particular liturgical action.

The account of the baptism of the first Gentiles in Acts 10:44-48 suggests a model based on the events of Pentecost: first a general outpouring of the Holy Spirit, followed by water baptism 'in the name of Jesus Christ'. This suggests that Peter's action of baptising the Gentiles with water was a visible sign of belonging to God because the gift of the Holy Spirit had already been given. However, Lampe suggests that the Spirit coming before baptism on this occasion was a matter of its unique importance and not typical. For the purposes of catechesis, we can associate Acts 10 with the concept of σφραγίς as a mark of God's ownership, and point out that rites of water baptism were not replaced but given a new meaning by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter's speech in Acts 10 identifies Jesus as 'anointed' in a way which recalls his baptism: 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power' (Acts 10:38). Together with other texts⁹⁷ this shows how scriptural concepts of anointing were not only attached to Jesus but also to Jesus' baptism. hence, arguably, Christian baptism. With hindsight, we might connect the understanding of Jesus' baptism as an anointing with John 6:27 where it seems to be a 'sealing', so as to suggest that Jesus receiving the Father's seal carries the meaning of consecration as priest, prophet and king, although no New Testament texts explicitly bring together both anointing and sealing, and such connections only become apparent in rites of initiation from the second century.⁹⁸ In this way a network of meanings is established that connects Jesus' baptism and his authentication as *Messiah* (anointed one) with Christian

⁹⁷ See Heb. 1:9: anointing from Ps. 45:6-7 is used to identify Jesus as the Son of God; and Lk. 4:18: Jesus quotes from Isaiah 61:1-2 to identify himself as the anointed one.

⁹⁸ A full discussion of the emergence of baptismal rites of anointing, and whether they can be dated as early as the second century, is in Chapter 5.

baptism and the indwelling of the Spirit for ministry. It is how this body of connections was managed in Christian practice and understanding of baptism that is central to understanding how teaching on σφραγίς has become attached to confirmation.

Moving on to Acts 15, we meet the debates over the need for circumcision amongst the earliest Christian communities. Kavanagh connects their problems over their relationship with Judaism with a 'process of ritualizing Christian initiation'⁹⁹ and suggests that it is an 'evolution' in practice, language and culture, marking social change within the early Church. To explain social change, Kavanagh emphasizes that the first Christians formed a group that was markedly different from existing socio-religious groups, thus suggesting the need for an identity. This need is addressed by developing initiatory practice in line with the evolution of baptismal practice from pre-paschal water baptism to post-paschal baptism with water to confer the Spirit. The implications herein for the meaning of 'the seal of the Spirit' are that as Pentecost provides the outpouring of the Spirit as God's promise to the whole Church, it also establishes a need for a concept of the Spirit that will explain how the Spirit is bestowed on individual members to mark them indelibly as members of the Christian community.

According to Acts 10, the first Gentiles were baptized after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, but what was to become of those who had already received the baptism of John? Evidence in Acts is inconclusive, but worth careful consideration as part of the bigger picture of early Christian practices and of attitudes to baptismal sealing with the gift of the Holy Spirit. It would seem safe to assume that Acts 1:5 'you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit' refers primarily to the events of Pentecost and does not indicate a need for rebaptism. The case of Apollos in Acts 18:25 appears strange: though 'he knew only the baptism of John' there is no explicit evidence that he was re-baptized, which may suggest that John's baptism alone was

⁹⁹ Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism* p.23.

considered adequate. It is possible that inconsistencies over early baptismal rites, and over which baptism included the gift of the Holy Spirit, and how, would have contributed towards the need in the early Christian community for a particular practice and language by which entry into their Christian culture was defined. Bearing in mind that Paul wrote before Luke, it is reasonable to suggest that the image ‘he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts’ (2 Cor. 1:22) may have appeared as a response to a need perceived by Paul to explain the effects of Christian baptism as an imprint conferring Christian identity, even if Ephesians is non-Pauline and later. Luke, however, may have been concerned to demonstrate the work of the Spirit at key moments in the Church’s expansion which would account for an apparent lack of consistency concerning the rites.

Acts 19:4 suggests that Paul upheld John’s baptism of repentance as also being a baptism into faith in Jesus Christ, thus setting it apart from Jewish proselyte baptism and apparently authenticating it; but these disciples at Ephesus were re-baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and had hands laid on them. Congar emphasizes that this example in Acts 19:1-7 should not lead to separating Spirit baptism from water baptism, but rather that the story demonstrates the link between the gift of the Spirit and the name of Jesus at baptism.¹⁰⁰

Consistency of this account with the rest of Acts lies in Luke’s portrayal of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Congar points out that this is inseparable from his Christology and soteriology. The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples at Ephesus because of their profession of faith in Jesus. This is also consistent with post-paschal Church teaching in the New Testament, and upholds Acts 5:32: ‘the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him’.

¹⁰⁰ Congar, Y. *I believe in the Holy Spirit* vol. 2 *Lord and Giver of Life* London: Chapman 1983, p.193 -194.

Acts, therefore, despite chronological and sequential inconsistencies, does portray the early Church's liturgical practice of baptism in the name of Jesus which includes or is closely associated with the gift of the Spirit, with a tantalising hint that the laying on of hands may be sometimes or often involved. Whilst Luke does not use σφραγίς or σφραγίζω, the concept of the Spirit given to initiates at baptism in a way that empowers (Acts 19:6) and transforms (Acts 2:38-39) them provides the context for the emergence of images of 'seal' for the Spirit that had been portrayed in 2 Corinthians 1:22 and were or would be in Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30. Whilst the model of Christian baptism remains the baptism of Jesus, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost dominates Luke's theology and provides a clear sequence of events in which proclamation and conversion are followed by baptism in the name of Christ and the gift of the Spirit.¹⁰¹

Moving outside Acts, an example of the evolution of language, imagery and culture concerning what it means to be baptized is found in the First Epistle of Peter. Peter demonstrates that being part of the Christian community includes sharing in Jesus as his chosen people by the imagery of living stones and by his portrayal of belonging to Jesus in 1 Peter 2:4-5. Peter alludes to Jewish concepts of being chosen by God for his possession and presents images of identity and belonging associated with conformity to the priesthood and kingship of Christ. This is consistent with the closeness of style in Peter's letter to that of Ephesians and Romans (which to some makes Peter's authorship doubtful). For the sake of catechesis we can draw Peter's teaching together with Paul's into a rich body of theology, contributing to the network of concepts associated with sealing in Christian initiation. Although Peter does not use the vocabulary of 'sealing', the language and baptismal theology denoted here suggest a developing theology in which baptismal rites mark the initiate as belonging to Jesus. There is little mention of the Spirit in 1 Peter, although Peter's calling for a

¹⁰¹ Congar, vol. 2 *Lord and Giver of Life*.

new way of life may suggest a connection with the work of the Spirit. In 1 Peter 3:20, 21, Peter teaches that as God chose Noah's family to be saved from the flood, so Christians are saved through baptismal water. Peter's imagery of water as the 'pledge of a good conscience given to God'¹⁰² exemplifies a developing theology of the salvific effects of baptism in which a spiritual transformation is brought about by physical rites involving water.

Hebrews 6:1-2 refers to the laying on of hands as part of the 'fundamental doctrines' of the Church, namely 'repentance from dead works, and faith toward God, with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement'. The implication is the baptismal ritual (however far it had evolved) was by now well understood as a standardised rite, or maybe rites involving liturgical actions both with water and with the laying on of hands. If the latter, this verse does question Lampe's limitations on who received the laying on of hands. But by 'the laying on of hands' was the author of Hebrews necessarily describing a rite associated with or completing baptism? Written later than Paul, Hebrews reflects a concern for authenticity, which suggests that the laying on of hands may have been the commissioning of ministers. Even if Hebrews 6:1-2 refers to ordination not baptism, and points to the importance of being in communion with authenticated ministers whose appointment goes back to the Apostles, it provides evidence that the laying on of hands was already a sacramental action, even if it was later extended to the remaining two of confirmation, reconciliation and holy orders.

Conclusion to chapter; theological and catechetical value

This Chapter has investigated what the New Testament says about sealing, through the use of *σφραγίς*, *σφραγίζω* and related terms, and also by implication through the initiation rites

¹⁰² 1 Peter 3:21 NJB 'Pledge' in this context is an English transliteration of the Greek term *επερώτημα* (question). It denotes the request for repentance before baptism rather than *ἀπαβών* or down-payment on salvation given at baptism.

recorded, in conjunction with concepts and images of the Spirit in relation to baptism and Christian salvation. The influence of Old Testament images and concepts, including uses of 'seal', has been identified. The investigation has suggested the early Christian community's need for concepts to satisfy the social need for identity and to express God's promise of salvation in simple imagery. Based on Old Testament and secular uses, terms involving 'sealing' are among those adopted into a Christian context, and are seen in identified key texts to provide the basis for a Christian doctrine of initiation and developing baptismal liturgy.

Already prefigured at the beginning of the world, this Church was prepared in marvellous fashion in the history of the people of Israel and in the ancient alliance. Established in this last age of the world and made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit it will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time.¹⁰³

The Jewish understanding of circumcision may have contributed to the New Testament understanding of baptism, as it did to later Christian theology. However, the newness and difference of Christian baptism are clearly more prominent in the minds of the New Testament authors.

It can be concluded that Christian rites involving water and the gift of the Holy Spirit are centred on the baptism of Christ as well as on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. That these events, which are among the pillars of the Christian faith, are taken in the Church's tradition to prefigure the sacraments of baptism and confirmation (both prefiguring both) indicates that conformity to Christ through sharing his life, ministry, death and resurrection must lie at the centre of all catechesis on baptism and confirmation, as well as the outpouring of the Spirit. The network of meanings associated with 'sealing' must also look back to both events. Baptism and confirmation encapsulate being permanently 'sealed' or attested as belonging to God, through the grace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus' baptism and Pentecost are called upon when catechising for confirmation, although New Testament authors

¹⁰³ Flannery A. (ed.) 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium 2' *Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* Dublin: Dominican Publications 1996.

would not have seen the baptism of Christ and Pentecost as prefiguring a distinct sacrament of confirmation. This underpins Lampe's argument that there is no rite or theology of confirmation which the New Testament holds firm. It is essential to continue to evaluate New Testament texts on their own merit.

If we add to Jesus' baptism and Pentecost the image of Jesus' anointing and his act of breathing the Spirit on his disciples, we have further roots of a theology of the 'seal of the Spirit', 'dramatised' by anointing and involving the idea of mission and conformity to Christ.

John 3:5-8 shows the Spirit as wind in connection with baptismal rebirth and renewal. This metaphor provides an accessible early Christian theology of the transforming effects of the baptismal gift of the Spirit. This network of ideas contributes to a picture of the work and 'personal character' of the Spirit by demarcating the salvific purpose of the gift of the Spirit and the transforming effect that the Spirit's presence has on the lives of those who have been reborn.

The connection of σφραγίς, σφραγίζω and χαρακτήρ with the baptism of Christ is a key factor distinguishing the early Christian theology of sealing from its ancient Jewish and pagan roots.

True, in the New Testament 'sealing' is only referred to as performed by God in John 6:27, 2 Corinthians 1:22, and Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30.¹⁰⁴ Each of these sealing references is identified by Bernard as alluding to Christian baptism.¹⁰⁵ It is arguable that the concept of 'sealing' as soon employed in the early Christian understanding of Christian baptism resulted from Pauline theology only, due to John 6:27 not referring explicitly to the baptism of Christ. However, it is reasonable to argue that John 6:27 does refer to the baptism of Jesus as his

¹⁰⁴ 1 Cor. 9:2 arguably sees the confirmation of Paul's apostolate as a 'seal' from God, but does not refer to a spiritual 'seal' and is therefore not included in this discussion.

¹⁰⁵ Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* p.191.

‘sealing’, and so is central to the meaning of sealing in the New Testament. If we see both baptism and confirmation as a share in Jesus’ sealing, we can say that his commission as priest, prophet and king is shared by confirmation candidates as they are conformed to Christ through anointing, the laying on of hands and the words ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’.

Besides John 6:27, Revelation 7:2 and 14:1 are significant supporters of the Pauline core teaching on what it means to be ‘sealed with the Spirit’. Lampe reminds us that in the key texts Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 21-22, Paul is explaining to his readers that by baptism they share in the effects of Christ’s own baptism and ‘they have been made sharers in the Messianic character, ‘anointed’ by God with the Spirit which stamps them for the day of redemption’.¹⁰⁶ The commonality of these markedly different Pauline and Johannine texts is that together they epitomise New Testament teaching on what it means to be sealed with the Holy Spirit, through explicit use of σφραγίς or σφραγίζω and in their identification of the transforming effects of being ‘sealed’ for conformity to Christ as priest, prophet and king. Whilst we may now attach this conformity to Christ to the *χαρακτηρ* of confirmation, the ‘sealing’ of the New Testament first and foremost refers to Christian baptism.

Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis to defend the legitimacy of applying New Testament baptismal theology to the sacrament of confirmation, Kavanagh’s drawing attention to ‘the pouring out of the Spirit in the initiation process’¹⁰⁷ which is holistic and comprises proclamation and conversion followed by baptism may help us avoid restricting the theology of the ‘seal of the Spirit’ too narrowly to only one element in the process.

¹⁰⁶ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.6.

¹⁰⁷ Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism* p.25.

The close identification of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω with ἀρραβών in Paul, and John's three-tiered eschatology, together emphasize how a network of ideas from pre-Christian times has culminated in an imagery of 'sealing' to describe the active presence of the Spirit in the present moment of Christian initiation and as a down-payment on the future robe of glory.

With the help of Revelation 7:2 and 14:1, as well as the association of σφραγίς with ἀρραβών, we can add to the catechetical themes of identity, authentication, and post-confirmation mission in conformity to Christ, the theme of a down-payment on salvation for those who have been 'sealed' visibly or invisibly, the entire Christian community through time represented by the 144,000 sealed.

The network of concepts surrounding the 'seal of the Spirit' has thus been synthesized into two main areas, each centred on two catechetical themes: first, 'sealing' as being authenticated as belonging to God in Christian rites of initiation; and, second, the eschatological theme of 'sealing' for salvation, with the effects of 'sealing' empowering the individual now and for apocalyptic protection.

Characteristic Lucan references to the effects of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:15,41,67; 4:1) help enlarge the early Christian understanding of the Spirit as an inspiring presence. Metaphors of wind (Jn. 3:8; Acts 2:2), fire (Acts 2:3) and truth (Jn.14:17), and the term Παράκλητος (Paraclete, Counsellor; Jn. 14:16,26) for the Holy Spirit express an understanding of the Spirit's transforming effect, and can contribute to an integrated theology and catechesis that draws on a range of New Testament teachings and texts to explain the 'seal of the Spirit', even though it is unlikely that the authors of these texts had the concept of σφραγίς consciously in mind.

Certainly it is unlikely that any non-Pauline New Testament writer had a concept of the sacramental seal. However a network of connections between Old Testament concepts of

sealing, anointing and the indwelling of the Spirit, the New Testament texts identified, and the patristic theology and liturgy to be investigated, feeds in a unified way into the catechetical themes: God's mark of identity and authentication signifies the indwelling Spirit which transforms the lives of those who are 'sealed' and by its presence becomes down-payment on salvation. The Holy Spirit, who appeared at Jesus' baptism, is conferred as a gift for the authentication of purpose by Jesus on the apostles, most of all in the outpouring at Pentecost, which the sacraments perpetuate.

It is clear therefore that whilst explicit language and theology of 'sealing' appears exclusive to Paul and John, there is much in the New Testament which has catechetical potential for learning about the 'seal of the Spirit'. Catechesis can draw on three chronological stages: pre-Christian Jewish and pagan concepts and images of 'sealing'; the Christianization of concepts and images of 'sealing' as a result mainly of the baptism of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; and the present transforming effects of the Spirit which are also a pledge of what is to come.

If the meaning of the words 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' are to be understood by the newly confirmed and internalised as part of their life in Christ, then the four catechetical themes of 'sealing' shall need to be grounded in the tradition from which they developed, and interpreted through the teaching of Paul but also that of John 6:27, with the strong imagery of sealing in the book of Revelation. The latter can be used to teach that Christians are 'sealed' at confirmation as a pledge on the greater glory at the end of time, and that Christian sacraments are events of the present moment and signs of the future time. Thus a firm foundation of shared understanding can be established from which the newly confirmed shall be able to apply their understanding of what it means to be 'sealed' to their call to participate fully in the

life of the Church in their time, to their role in the mission of the whole Church in bringing about the Kingdom of God, and to their future hope for salvation.

Our next task is to consider how New Testament concepts of the 'seal of the Spirit' were developed in early Christian baptismal liturgy and theology.

CHAPTER 5

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RITES AND IMAGERY TO DO WITH 'SEALING' IN CHRISTIAN INITIATION

The previous chapter has identified that the phrase '*Accipe signaculum Domini Spiritus Sancti*'¹ carries a weight of pre-Christian theological and historical tradition which has been brought into a Christian socio-religious context and drawn on by New Testament texts. Centred on Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 and supported by John 6:27 and Revelation 7:2 and 14:1 this teaching comprises a catechetical resource to explain 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' and enable the newly confirmed to apply it their lives.

Chapter 4 maintains that the 'seal of the Spirit' is closely approximated to 'baptism' in Paul and includes the eschatological σφραγίς. New Testament teaching provides fundamental concepts and uses of σφραγίς and σφραγιζω which appear in baptismal rites from the end of the first to the fifth centuries AD. This chapter investigates sealing in the Fathers and early baptismal liturgies to bridge the gap between sealing in the New Testament and the seal of confirmation to find out what was happening to concepts and meanings of 'sealing' when there was no rite of confirmation distinct from baptism. We shall investigate the role of 'anointing and sealing' in rites of baptism from the first to fifth centuries AD and look at reasons for the introduction of anointing, what it achieved that wasn't already happening in water-baptism and whether the gift of the Spirit was bestowed during rites of immersion, anointing or hand-laying.

¹ 'Rite of Confirmation' *The Rites of the Catholic Church as revised by the Second Vatican Council* New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1976 p.301.

Lampe² maintains that Paul considers baptism to be the rite in which Christians are sealed but the New Testament does not clearly demonstrate that there was another rite which always and essentially followed baptism and imparted the gift of the Spirit instead of baptism. This investigation of how far early Christian understanding of the 'seal' should be equated with baptism does not refute this part of Lampe's argument but builds on it with an appraisal of early Christian liturgies. Rites of immersion, anointing and hand-laying evidenced from Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Africa are considered for their influence on the rites of Rome and Milan, which in turn are considered representative of the evolution of 'sealing' in the Western Church. The Fathers' use of sources will be investigated to further understanding of the place of the 'seal of the Spirit' in their teaching and their influence on the development of baptismal liturgy.

Evidence from Early Christian Writings

Key texts have been selected because they demonstrate most clearly the baptismal rites of their time. As Jungmann emphasizes, the early Church developed in the context of 'rich liturgical'³ practice with the liturgy and community depending on each other. Whilst this is reflected in scripture and tradition, the eschatological implications for being sealed into membership of the body of Christ through baptismal rites shall also be considered with reference to chosen patristic texts. We must acknowledge that the contributions of John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia to the Syrian tradition of post-baptismal anointing with *myron* as a 'seal' during fourth century are significant West Syrian sources for post-baptismal anointing with or without the gift of the Spirit. Martimort⁴ maintains that *Mystagogical Catecheses* attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem as a principle source of initiation rites, along with the teachings of Ambrose of Milan, Theodore of Mopsuestia,

² Lampe, G.H.W. *The Seal of the Spirit* London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1951.

³ Jungmann, J., S.J., *The Early Liturgy to the time of Gregory the Great* London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd. 1959 p.10.

⁴ Martimort, A.G. (ed.) *The Church at Prayer* Vol. III. New edition, London: Geoffrey Chapman & Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1988.

John Chrysostom and Augustine. Martimort draws attention to the use of fragrant oil, *Chrisma* in the Latin tradition and *myron* in the East, in baptismal rites and points to the Old Testament origins of the use of oil for anointing priests, prophets and kings.

Text	Written by/ Attributed to	Pre-baptismal Rites/Requests	Baptismal Rites	Post-baptismal Rites
<i>The Didache</i> 7			Immersion 'in living water' or 3 pourings (fasting for repentance, 3-fold profession of faith)	
<i>First Apology</i>	Justin Martyr		Washing for regeneration in the name of the Trinity.	
<i>Against Heresies</i>	Irenaeus	No recorded rites		
<i>De Baptismo</i>	Tertullian		Immersion, faith 'sealed' by 3 fold name.	Anointing with chrism Hand-laying
<i>Apostolic Tradition</i>	'Hippolytus'	Blessing of the water, washing, fasting, sealing, hand-laying (exorcism), sealing on the forehead, ears and nostrils (<i>Effeta</i>) and anointing (exorcised oil)	Confession of faith, triple immersion in 3-fold name (repentance, purification) Anointing (oil of thanksgiving)	Hand-laying, epiclesis, anointing (oil of thanksgiving – sealing as consignation)

<i>Acts of Thomas</i> Syriac and Greek versions	Judas Thomas	Possessed Woman requests 'seal' prevention of return of devil <u>Gundophorus</u> requests 'sign' (Syriac version) 'seal' (Greek version) <u>Mygdonia</u> requests 'seal', anointing –oil on head for purification, sanctification and healing. <u>Sifur/Siphor</u> Anointing (glory to 'unseen power') <u>Vizan</u> and <u>women</u> Anointing with oil invoking gift [of Spirit], second anointing (no details)	Possessed Woman: 'Baptized' in river, 3 fold name (Syriac version only) <u>Gundophorus</u> : water baptism in 3-fold name <u>Mygdonia</u> Water baptism in 3-fold name <u>Sifur/Siphor</u> Baptismal water from a vat. <u>Vizan</u> and <u>women</u> water baptism	Possessed Woman: no details except 'made ready' for Eucharist (Syriac). Imposition of hands and 'sealing' in 3- fold name (Greek version). <u>Gundophorus</u> : anointed and chrismed' including gift of Holy Spirit; second seal in 3- fold name <u>Mydonia</u> , <u>Sifur</u> and <u>Vizan</u> and the <u>woman</u> : no details
<i>Catechetical Lectures, Mystagogical Catechesis</i>	Cyril of Jerusalem	Anointing (oil of exorcism)	Water baptism triple immersion in 3-fold name	Anointing with chrism (sealing) and <i>epiclesis</i> –gift of the Spirit ; anointing on forehead, ears, nostrils and breast
<i>De Mysteriis, De Sacramentis</i>	Ambrose	<i>Effeta</i> –opening ears and nostrils; anointing (exorcism), signing with the cross	Immersion in 3-fold name (consecrated water) – new birth and forgiveness. Anointing into eternal life.	Supporting rites, chrismation, sealing with the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit

Table 1: Early Christian Baptismal Rites

*The Didache (or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)*⁵.

Part of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and originally from Syria,⁶ the *Didache* contains the first recorded rites of baptism of the Early Church.⁷ Kavanagh states that the first seven chapters of the *Didache* had been written by 100 AD⁸. Of the versions of the *Didache* available, the Coptic version may contain early fragments which may have been suppressed in other versions. As water pouring with the three-fold name⁹ is the only recorded baptismal rite it can be concluded that the Holy Spirit was conferred at that point and therefore not dependent on any rites involving 'sealing', anointing or the imposition of hands. It is highly unlikely that the *Didache* evidences any practice of baptismal anointing during the second century. Although baptism in the Trinity is distinctly Christian, Kavanagh¹⁰ points out that the pre-baptismal teaching of the *Didache* 1-7 has a Jewish tone, being grounded in the Ten Commandments and with emphasis on the 'Name'. This observation suggests that baptism was seen as a rite of transition and that the water rite at the time was accepted the outward sign of repentance, the gift of the Holy Spirit and spiritual transformation. The *Didache* states that baptism should be in running water, although the proviso that baptism can take place in other water by infusion is thought by Nocent¹¹ to be a later addition.

⁵ Source: Whitaker, E.C (ed.) *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, London: S.P.C.K. 1970.

⁶ Day, J. *The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem: Fourth and Fifth Century Evidence from Palestine, Syria and Egypt* Aldershot: Ashgate 2007 p.40.

⁷ This treatise was rediscovered in 1873 by Bryennios as part of a longer codex of *Apostolic Constitutions*. Its appearance is primitive and although some scholars have argued that it may be as late as the fourth century there lacks evidence to support this. Its reconstructed form is usually agreed to have been published originally between 80 and 100 AD.

⁸ Kavanagh, A. *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation*, New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1978, p.36.

⁹ As in Matt.28:19.

¹⁰ Kavanagh A. *The Shape of Baptism* p.38.

¹¹ Nocent, Adrien. O.S.B. 'Christian Initiation during the First Four Centuries.' Anscar Chupungco, J., O.S.B. (ed.) *Handbook for Liturgical Studies. Volume IV: Sacraments and Sacramentals* Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2000. p.5-28.

Logan¹² argues that anointing is evidenced in the *μύρον* prayer in the Coptic version of the *Didache*. He states that this precedes the *Apostolic Constitutions* (possibly as early as AD 200) and was likely to have been incorporated the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Day¹³ states that Logan's argument does not provide sufficient evidence of post-baptismal anointing as early as 200 AD. Mueller¹⁴ refutes Logan's argument by questioning whether the Coptic *sinoufi* translates as *μύρον* or refers to incense, thus negating any evidence of anointing. Ysebaert also states that a Coptic fragment from the *Didache* refers to blessing oil after the Eucharist, but not to anointing because *ευωδία* is used rather than *μύρον*.¹⁵ This is consistent with the use of *ελαιον* rather than *μύρον* or *χρυσμα* in contemporary documents and reinforces that anointing was not part of baptismal rites at the end of the first century. The presence of rites of water baptism in the three-fold name and the absence of rites of anointing in the *Didache* adds credence to the view that we are looking at a very ancient set of instructions for the initiation of Christians where we see baptism, without anointing, as essential preparation for the Eucharist.

First Apology¹⁶

Written in about AD 150, Justin Martyr's *First Apology* was associated with the Greek speaking Church of Rome. Baptismal washing 'with the water ...'¹⁷ follows a period of instruction about prayer and fasting for repentance. The celebrant, already 'enlightened' is 'worthy' to call on the Name of God. The catechumen is described as 'he who is to be enlightened' – implying that 'washing' in the three-fold name brings faith. The term 'enlightenment' may indicate the gift of the Spirit, but is not stated as such. Equally 'enlightened' may refer to those already in possession of faith.

¹² Logan, A. 'Post-baptismal Chrismation in Syria: the evidence of Ignatius, the *Didache* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*' *Journal of Theological Studies* NS49 (1998) p.92 -108.

¹³ Day, *Baptismal Liturgy* p.112.

¹⁴ Mueller, J.G., S.J., 'Post-baptismal Chrismation in Second Century Syria: A reconsideration of the evidence' *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 57, (2006) p.76-93.

¹⁵ Ysebaert, J. *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, Nijmegen: Dekker and van de Vegt, 1962, p.299.

¹⁶ Sources used: Whitaker E.C. *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*; Schaff (trans) *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.i.html>

¹⁷ Apol. 61.

The main difference between Justin's account and the *Didache* is the association of baptism with rebirth as well as repentance. For the neophyte the association of baptism with new life in Christ is clear. It seems that the rites in the *First Apology* contain the essential ingredients of repentance, regeneration and transformation, which are part of the New Testament theology of baptism and the Church had not yet seen a need to add further rites.

*Against Heresies.*¹⁸

Written towards the end of the second century AD by Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* does not record rites of baptism. However Irenaeus explains that σφραγίς and the 'earnest' (ἄρραβών) includes the gift of the Holy Spirit with reference to Ephesians 1:13-14. 'this earnest, therefore, dwelling in us renders us spiritual even now'.¹⁹ Irenaeus demonstrates an understanding that ἄρραβών is *pars pro toto*, a portion of God's Spirit conferred as a down-payment on the whole which shall be conferred 'little by little' as the recipient becomes ready to receive it. Irenaeus defends baptism as being for remission of sins and redemption in Christ. He states that those who are baptized possess the indwelling Spirit to emphasize that knowledge comes through Christian baptism rather than Gnosticism. The scriptural influence of Paul, hinted at in Justin's explanation of baptism as regeneration, is clearly stated in Irenaeus' teaching on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is consistent with Irenaeus's *Demonstratio Apostolica* which mentions baptism in the three-fold name for forgiveness and to confer a 'seal'. This 'seal' is described by Nocent as a 'sign of new life in God'²⁰ and suggests the parity between σφραγίς and ἄρραβών that we see in Ephesians 1:14 taking a part in the developing theology of the 'seal of the Spirit'.

¹⁸ Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* books 1,3,4,5 (Source: Roberts A. and Donaldson J. (eds) *The Anti-Nicene Fathers* volume 1, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark 1993 edition.

¹⁹ *Adversus Haereses* V, vii, 1.

²⁰ Nocent, 'Christian Initiation' p.15.

Written around AD 200, Tertullian's baptismal teaching was associated with the Latin Church of Carthage. *De Baptismo* is an instructional text for the literate Christian community with a systematic description of rites, although for us the significance of Tertullian lies in the importance he attaches to the post-baptismal rite of the imposition of hands. Stewart-Sykes²² sets out to show that the imposition of hands to confer the gift of the Spirit in Tertullian provides the foundation for associating hand-laying with the gift of the Spirit in confirmation.²³ Stewart-Sykes questions the popular practice of reconstructing Tertullian's rites in the context of *Apostolic Tradition* on the grounds that that the *Apostolic Tradition* is not typical of western rites. Whilst it is more likely that the *Apostolic Tradition* differs from Tertullian because it contains much later writings, the usefulness of Stewart-Sykes work is that he discusses the purpose of each of Tertullian's different rites to prove that the gift of the Spirit is only associated with the imposition of hands.²⁴ Tertullian teaches that an angel comes on the water and the water conveys sanctity, indicating that the water has power to cleanse the initiate spiritually in preparation to receive the Holy Spirit.

Not that *in* the waters we obtain the Holy Spirit; but in the water, under (the witness of) the angel, we are cleansed, and prepared *for* the Holy Spirit.²⁵

Stewart-Sykes points out that the phrase *spiritus de caelis*²⁶ refers to the spiritual nature of the angel and not to the Holy Spirit. He refutes the view of Kelly²⁷ and Lampe²⁸ that there is 'confusion' in Tertullian about when the gift of the Spirit is conferred but uses the

²¹ Sources: Roberts, A and Donaldson J. (eds) *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* volume III *Latin Christianity and its founder Tertullian* Edinburgh T & T Clarke 1993 edition.

Whitaker, *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*; his source: Evans, E. *Tertullian's Homily on Baptism*, SPCK 1964.

²² Stewart-Sykes, Alistair, 'Manumission and Baptism in Tertullian's Africa: A Search for the Origin of Confirmation' *Studia Liturgica* 31 (2001) p.129-149.

²³ Stewart-Sykes writes as an Anglican. He points out that the laying on of hands in confirmation is given the most significance in Anglican and Lutheran traditions.

²⁴ Questions over the dating and authorship of the *Apostolic Tradition* are discussed in full below.

²⁵ De Bapt. 6:1 (Editors' parenthesis and italics) p.672.

²⁶ De Bapt. 4:4 quoted in Stewart-Sykes 'Manumission and Baptism' p.133.

²⁷ Kelly J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrines* 5th revised edition, London: Continuum 1977 p.209.

²⁸ Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* p.161-162.

meaning of *spiritus de caelis* to clarify that the Holy Spirit was not conferred with the water. He also refutes Mitchell's view that Tertullian saw the washing, anointing and imposition of hands as a single rite by maintaining the separate purposes of each. Furthermore, Stewart-Sykes argues that the angel is 'functional' rather than 'ontological' and the preparation of the water was christic and not pneumatic.²⁹ Baptism, witnessed by an angel, recalls how John the Baptist was witness to Christ.

Thus, too, does the angel, who is the witness of baptism 'make the paths straight' for the Holy Spirit who is about to come upon us, by the washing away of sins, which faith, sealed in (the name of) the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit obtains.³⁰

Tertullian alludes to 'sealed' in the context of acquired faith in preparation to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptismal water is connected with creation, life and baptismal regeneration and preparation. Kelly points out that 'following Christ's example we are born in the water and can only be saved by remaining in it.'³¹ It is necessary for salvation.³²

Following the gift of faith, a post-baptismal rite of anointing recollects Aaron anointed by Moses and teaches that the physical act of anointing produces a spiritual effect.³³ It does not confer the gift of the Spirit and is, moreover, seen by Stewart-Sykes as being centred on Christ rather than the Holy Spirit. Nowhere in Tertullian's writings is it suggested that anointing confers the gift of the Spirit although 'the flesh is anointed so that the soul may be consecrated'³⁴ adds credence to the view that the rite of anointing is also in preparation to receive the Holy Spirit. Stewart-Sykes dismisses this as a reference to consignation on the grounds that it is unlikely that there were any rites of consignation in Tertullian's writings although it is evidenced, after the imposition of hands, by the time of Cyprian.

²⁹ Stewart-Sykes 'Manumission and Baptism' p.134.

³⁰ De Bapt. 6:1 (Editors' parenthesis) p.672.

³¹ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* p.209.

³² De Bapt. 12.

³³ De Bapt. 7:1.

³⁴ De Res. 8:3.

De Baptismo 8:1 refers both to hand-laying and invocation of the Holy Spirit:

In the next place the hand is laid upon us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through benediction.³⁵

Stewart-Sykes' view that hand-laying has its origins in a social function to mark the new initiates' entry into the Christian community supports Tertullian's connection, that Kelly refers to, between post-baptismal imposition of hands and Jacob blessing his grandsons. Tertullian's series of rites seems clear: the water cleanses the initiate physically and spiritually, anointing consecrates him and hands-laying confers the gift of the Holy Spirit. These rites are sequential and interrelated inasmuch as they all lead to the new initiate receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It appears that Tertullian's rites are independent on the rites described in the *Apostolic Tradition*. Stewart-Sykes states the Tertullian's view presents a contrasting picture to that of Hippolytus with reference to Kavanagh's argument that the post-baptismal ceremonies in the *Apostolic Tradition* are a *missa* rite. Stewart-Sykes argues that Tertullian's emphasis on hand-laying to confer the gift of the Spirit negates Kavanagh's assumption that African rites are derived from the Roman rites set out in the *Apostolic Tradition*. Baldovin³⁶ cites Bradshaw, Johnson and Phillips who concur that pre-baptismal and post-baptismal anointing are nowhere combined before the fourth century but that hand-laying was associated with the gift of the Spirit by Tertullian and Cyprian during the third century. Arguably, Tertullian's rites could not have been influenced by the *Apostolic Tradition* because baptismal rites in Tertullian demonstrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to be conferred with hand-laying only and that the *Apostolic Tradition* is the product of a later tradition in which the gift of the Spirit is associated with anointing. Tertullian's association of hand-laying with the gift of the Spirit arguably provides the liturgical roots for one aspect of the

³⁵ De Bapt. 8:1.

³⁶ Baldovin J.F., S.J., 'Hippolytus and the Apostolic Tradition: Recent Research and Commentary' *Theological Studies* 64 (2003) p.535.

sacrament of confirmation and prompts further discussion about whether the 'seal' of the gift of the Holy Spirit is baptism as a whole, anointing or the imposition of hands.

*The Apostolic Tradition*³⁷

Traditionally attributed to Hippolytus, the *Apostolic Tradition* is an explanatory text for the Christian community, which some have claimed was written in AD 215.³⁸ It contains a detailed account of Christian initiation and reveals a complex rite of baptism in three distinct phases. The stages of baptismal initiation in *Apostolic Tradition* have, with recent exceptions³⁹, been accepted as representative of the third century Greek speaking Church of Rome. For this reason, Kavanagh⁴⁰ groups *Apostolic Tradition* with Justin's *First Apology* and Tertullian's *De Baptismo* and argues that the hand-laying and second anointing is a rite of dismissal. Johnson⁴¹ disagrees with Kavanagh and Turner questions the date of *Apostolic Tradition* 21, arguing that these so-called *missa* rites should be seen as public authentication.

In order to tap into what the *Apostolic Tradition* might tell us about baptismal rites of sealing, we must consider current thinking about the document's date and origins, and investigate how far the *Apostolic Tradition* is representative of later or non-Roman liturgy. Johnson describes the *Apostolic Tradition* as revealing a 'ritual pattern' which is not unlike the liturgical tradition of North Africa and with a structure 'highly consistent' with

³⁷ Sources: Quotations from Whitaker *Baptismal Liturgy*, who uses Dix, G. *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition* London: S.P.C.K. 1968 – see *Baptismal Liturgy* p. 3. Also Botte, Bernard, O.S.B, *La Tradition Apostolique de St. Hippolyte: essai de reconstitution*, Aschendorff: Münster Westfalen 1963.

³⁸ E.g. Whitaker *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*, p.2; Johnson, M.E. *The Rites of Christian Initiation: their evolution and interpretation*, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999 p.72-77.

³⁹ Scholarship preceding Baldwin questions how far the *Apostolic Tradition* does represent liturgical practice of its time, because there is no original Greek document and the earliest surviving manuscript is the Verona Latin, written in the fifth century, for example Johnson, Maxwell, E. 'The Post-Christmational Structure of *Apostolic Tradition* 21, the Witness of Ambrose of Milan, and a Tentative Hypothesis regarding the Current Reform of the Roman Rite', *Worship* 70 no.1. (1996) p 18-19.

⁴⁰ Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism* p.43, 44.

⁴¹ Johnson, M.E. 'The Post-Christmational Structure of *Apostolic Tradition* 21, the Witness of Ambrose of Milan, and a Tentative Hypothesis Regarding the Current Reform of Confirmation in the Roman Rite' *Worship* 70 (1996) p. 16 – 34.

Western liturgy in the early to mid third century.⁴² However, he looks to *Apostolic Tradition* 21 to challenge the ‘traditional scholarship’ of writers such as Dix and Botte who date the complete *Apostolic Tradition* to the third century.⁴³ Johnson questions whether the post-Christmational rites of *Apostolic Tradition* 21 influenced Roman rites of initiation and argues that it has different origins from those that had been traditionally accepted. Johnson cites Bradshaw who suggests that *Apostolic Tradition* 21 is probably not a single, localised rite but a collection of different practices over different times and places. Johnson suggests that the post-Christmational rites of *Apostolic Tradition* 21 probably date from between the mid fourth to early fifth century and became subsumed into the post-Christmational structure of the Roman rite.

Baldovin claims that rites of anointing in the *Apostolic Tradition* were the additions of later editors, probably from the fourth century by which time such rites had been established. He states that earlier editors had not equated presbyters with bishops and had felt the need to attribute roles to each, hence the emergence of anointing before and after baptism. It is widely held⁴⁴ that ‘Hippolytus’ is attempting to preserve the ‘essence of tradition which is proper for the churches’⁴⁵ by which, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, Christians are strengthened.⁴⁶ Finn argues that the development of the catechumenate as it is detailed by Hippolytus, accounted for the survival of the Christian community in Rome during the third century. His hypothesis states that initiation formed ‘an effective rite of passage’⁴⁷ which united the fragile Christian society. Finn’s argument offers a view as to why the liturgy of initiation began to include anointing, but is no longer tenable in the light of Baldovin’s argument. Furthermore, Finn’s argument presupposes that Hippolytus was an individual writer, whereas Baldovin challenges ‘the false synthesis known as *Apostolic*

⁴² Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*: p77.

⁴³ Johnson, ‘The Post-Christmational Structure’.

⁴⁴ For example Kavanagh, A. *The Shape of Baptism* p.44 and Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* p.208

⁴⁵ AT 1:2.

⁴⁶ AT 1:3-4.

⁴⁷ Finn, Thomas M. ‘Ritual Process and the Survival of Early Christianity: A Study of the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus’ *Journal of Ritual Studies* 3 no.1. (1989), p.69.

*Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome*⁴⁸ whilst critiquing Brent's hypothesis that the name 'Hippolytus' describes a 'Roman house church' or 'school'⁴⁹ in a community which was changing from a 'loose federation of house churches to a monarchical episcopate'⁵⁰ from the late second to mid-third centuries.

Baldovin places the *Apostolic Tradition* alongside fourth century rites such as those recorded by Ambrose; the later date explains the complexity of central and supporting rites such as pre- and post-baptismal 'sealing'. That there are three instances each of anointing⁵¹ and the imposition of hands⁵² is consistent with Baldovin's argument that the *Apostolic Tradition* consists of editorial layers and may include 'liturgies that never existed'. However, Baldovin claims that 'there can be no doubt at all' that the liturgies of the *Apostolic Tradition* significantly influenced later rites and 'shaped the contemporary liturgies of initiation'⁵³ which is where its catechetical usefulness lies. The significance of the *Apostolic Tradition* for later liturgy and catechesis is that it shows how the Church was beginning use external actions to make explicit what it wanted people to understand was happening during the different rites of baptism to initiate people into the Christian community and prepare them to receive the Eucharist. If we are thinking of anointing with the Spirit as a *missa* rite, we must remember that this was more a rite of commissioning which includes authentication and transition to the Eucharist than of dismissal. If we are thinking of anointing with consecrated oil as consignation we can identify meanings attached to both σφραγίς and χαρακτήρ applied to baptismal liturgy. There is a strong case to argue that the *Apostolic Tradition* shows us that by the fifth century the rudiments of the post-baptismal rite, which later became confirmation, have appeared. The evidence discussed here indicates that baptismal practice described in the *Apostolic Tradition* lies in

⁴⁸ Baldovin 'Hippolytus and the AT' p.521.

⁴⁹ Baldovin 'Hippolytus and the AT' p. 525.

⁵⁰ Baldovin 'Hippolytus and the AT' p.529.

⁵¹ Anointing for: exorcism (AT 21:10); thanksgiving (AT 21:19) and 'sealing' (AT 22:2).

⁵² The imposition of hands: 1st exorcism(AT 20:8); as creedal questions are asked in water (A T 22:12,14), 'sealing' (AT 22:2).

⁵³ Baldovin, 'Hippolytus and the AT' p.542.

the same group as the fourth century writings of Ambrose of Milan. Before considering the relation between the liturgies attributed to Rome and Milan with later works, we must establish a clearer picture of the development of baptismal liturgy which preceded them to avoid over-reliance on the *Apostolic Tradition*.

*The Acts of Thomas*⁵⁴

The *Acts of Judas Thomas* is an example of a third century apocryphal text, rich in language associated with 'sealing'. It includes details of five significantly different rites of initiation by anointing. Myers claims that the earliest Syriac written accounts of initiation are found here and that their differences challenge the assumption that baptismal immersion was the central rite of initiation.⁵⁵ The Syriac original and Greek translation differ significantly which also highlights the variety of ways in which the language of 'sealing' became associated with baptismal rites.

In chapter 26, the term 'seal' is equated with a mark of identity in a metaphor of being recognized by God:

God whom thou preachest knowest his own sheep by his seal⁵⁶

The Greek version of chapters 26 and 27 describe a rite of initiation by anointing with Chrism and Eucharist only, on which Myers bases her claim that a rite existed in early Syria where 'water baptism was, at most, optional'.⁵⁷ Myers claims that the Greek editor probably inserted the 'bath' into chapter 25 and the Syriac version emphasized the importance of immersion by detailing the initiates' entry into a bath house before anointing, suggesting that the original text relied only on anointing and water baptism was

⁵⁴ Sources: Whitaker who uses Wright W. *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, London 1871; James M.R. (trans.) *The Apocryphal New Testament* Oxford, Clarendon Press 1924.

⁵⁵ Myers, Susan E. 'Initiation by Anointing in Early Syriac Speaking Christianity' *Studia Liturgica* (2001) p.150 – 170.

⁵⁶ JT 26 in James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* p.375.

⁵⁷ Myers 'Initiation by Anointing' p.150.

added later. This precedence of anointing supports Winkler's⁵⁸ view that anointing was the most significant part of initiation in Syriac rites. Myers cites Winkler's argument that the evidence of Syriac rites shows that 'original baptismal anointing was understood to confer the Holy Spirit'.⁵⁹ Anointing and 'sealing' does appear to include the gift of the Spirit, in the anointing of Gundaphorus:

Come holy spirit and cleanse their reins and their heart and give them the added seal in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Ghost.⁶⁰

But how far is anointing in the *Acts of Thomas* consistent with sealing? And to what extent is sealing attached to the gift of the Holy Spirit? The term 'seal' is used in all five initiation rites but variously.

The Greek translation of JT 49 evidences the protective seal in connection with imposition of hands and prevention of evil.⁶¹ That the possessed woman asks for σφραγίς suggests that the language of 'sealing' was commonplace at least by the time of translation to Greek.⁶² Significantly σφραγίς is associated with hand-laying only in this instance as there is no mention of oil or water baptism. The Syriac version describes the woman baptised in the three-fold name in a river, but also makes no mention of anointing. This also presents us with an anomaly about the use of 'seal'. The Syriac version uses rušmā (sign, mark) whereas the Greek version uses σφραγίς. Myers equates both terms to 'seal' and suggests that it is used to denote rites of initiation⁶³ which show the prominence of immersion over anointing in this example. Whitaker also translates rušmā as 'seal', which Winkler⁶⁴ criticizes as inaccurate. Arguably, the imposition of hands is a 'sign' or 'mark' of

⁵⁸ Winkler, Gabriele, 'The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and its Implications' *Worship* 52.01 (1978) p.24-45 (reproduced in *Studies in Early Christian Liturgy and its Context* Variorum Collected Studies Series, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd 1997).

⁵⁹ Myers 'Initiation by Anointing' p.151.

⁶⁰ JT 27 in James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* p.376. NB James's lack of initial capitals for 'holy spirit' here is more consistent with invocations to 'compassionate mother' earlier in the same text than with 'Holy Ghost' which is why baptismal σφραγίς is suggested rather than confirmed to include the gift of the Holy Spirit.

⁶¹ Whitaker *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy* p.17. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, synthesizes the Syriac and Greek versions to arrive at imposition after baptismal washing.

⁶² JT 49 in James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* p.388.

⁶³ Myers 'Initiation by Anointing' p.153.

⁶⁴ Winkler 'The Original Meaning' p.27.

forgiveness rather than a 'seal' although there is insufficient evidence to suggest that 'sealing' is reserved either for baptism or anointing. The suggestion that those coming for baptism were asking for 'seal'⁶⁵ demonstrates that a connection between baptism and 'sealing' was understood. Furthermore JT 87 suggests that the 'seal' was connected with the gift of the Holy Spirit:

I also may receive the seal and become an holy temple and he may dwell in me.⁶⁶

Mygdonia's 'seal' in JT 121 would appear to refer to the whole rite of baptism, Eucharist and God's promise of salvation. Myers argues that it is common for the term 'seal' to apply to the whole rite of initiation in the *Acts of Thomas*. She maintains that it originally applied to anointing because it is central to initiation and it has become associated with the sign of the cross rather than baptism: 'Never is the term [seal] applied to baptism'.⁶⁷ We must be aware, nonetheless, of possible confusion from equating Myers' use of 'baptism' (water rites) with 'whole rite' which would render her argument untenable. The initiation of Vizan in the Acts of Thomas 157 clearly reinforces Myer's point that the 'seal' refers to anointing. Serra⁶⁸ claims that Mygdonia and Vizan were both anointed on the head and body for healing, forgiveness and strengthening. Myers concludes that early Christianity in Eastern Syria was characterized by initiation rites involving oil as the 'seal (or sign) of the new life in Christ. The *Acts of Thomas* provide evidence that 'sealing' is anointing in third century Syria. This point is key not only to understanding the development of rites involving sealing in the Eastern liturgy but also to understanding the synthesis of traditions from east and west which leads to an understanding of the sacramental 'seal' and 'character' of confirmation.

⁶⁵ JT 131. The Syriac version uses terms *rušmā* which is more readily associated with 'sign' or 'mark' than 'seal'. Wright's translation of the Syriac text uses 'sign' in the context of anointing, invocation of the name of the Messiah, water baptism in the three-fold name and Eucharist on the next morning (JT 2:25). However this is consistent with Latin and French translations of the AT and doesn't necessarily detract from the developing picture of baptismal *σφραγίς*.

⁶⁶ JT 87 in James *The Apocryphal New Testament* p.403.

⁶⁷ Myers 'Initiation by Anointing' p.157.

⁶⁸ Serra, Dominic E. 'Syrian Pre-baptismal anointing and Western Post-baptismal Chrismation' *Worship* 79 (2005) p. 328-341.

*Catechetical Lectures and Mystagogical Catecheses*⁶⁹

The *Catechetical Lectures* are traditionally accepted to have been delivered between 348 and 352, in Greek, by Cyril of Jerusalem, although the date and authorship of the *Mystagogical Catecheses* is a subject of scholarly debate. Day describes the first three *Mystagogical Catecheses* as ‘the most comprehensive account of baptism in Palestine’.⁷⁰ She challenges the traditional view that the *Catechetical Lectures* and *Mystagogical Catecheses* are a complete set of lectures to take place before and after baptism in the same year on the basis that they are stylistically, linguistically and theologically distinct. Day suggests that the *Mystagogical Catecheses* are the work of John of Jerusalem during the late fourth or early fifth century. Kelly attributes both sets of lectures to Cyril of Jerusalem and describes them as ‘fairly representative of Greek and Latin teaching about baptism in the fourth and fifth centuries’.⁷¹ Serra claims that the rites described by Cyril of Jerusalem represent the ‘complete transformation of the ancient Syrian system of anointing into a pattern like the Roman’. He states that ‘Cyril’s mystagogy’ is closer to that of Chrysostom than Western rites.⁷² All of this adds credence to Day’s view that there are ‘shared characteristics’⁷³ and influence between sources from Jerusalem and Palestine, West Syria and Egypt. This is essential to understanding the evolution of meanings attached to the ‘seal’ and establishing the place ‘sealing’ in rites of immersion, anointing and hand-laying to confer the gift of the Spirit.

Cyril quotes from the New Testament, using the terms ‘seal’ and ‘pledge’ together to invite his catechumens to baptism in the first *Catechetical Lecture*:

⁶⁹ *Catechetical and Mystagogical Lectures* Source: Schaff, P. and Wace, H. (eds) *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* volume VII, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark 1996 edition.

⁷⁰ Day, *Baptismal Liturgy* p.11.

⁷¹ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* p.429.

⁷² Serra ‘Syrian Pre-baptismal Anointing’ p.337.

⁷³ Day, *Baptismal Liturgy* p.10.

Get you the *earnest of the Holy Spirit*⁷⁴ through faith that ye may be able to be received *into the everlasting habitations*.⁷⁵ Come for the mystical Seal, that ye may be easily recognised by the Master.⁷⁶

Cyril appears to equate the 'seal' to baptism and use 'mystical seal' as an image for the pledge of the Holy Spirit on eternal life (απαβών). He also implies that the 'seal' is a mark of identity. So it seems that short phrase connects meanings which have been attached to σφραγίζω, χαρακτηρ and απαβών in the New Testament and unites them in the context of baptism. However, the reticent context of Cyril's catechesis is a mitigating factor here. Because he believes the unbaptized are not yet ready to understand the full meaning of baptism and leaves a full explanation until post-baptismal mystagogy, we have to be aware that much of Cyril's catechesis is implied. Whilst he seems to tell people they are going to receive the 'earnest' and the 'seal' he does not explain whether it is baptism, Chrismation or both. There is no mention either of anointing or oil in the *Catechetical Lectures*.

Clearly, for Cyril the action of immersion cleanses the body for the gift of the Holy Spirit: 'the Holy Ghost is about to seal your souls'.⁷⁷ However after epiclesis the baptismal water possesses a 'spiritual grace'⁷⁸ or power, based on the typology of the baptism of Christ. Cyril teaches that salvation depends on the seal of baptism and that it has been proved in the scriptures: 'Have thou ever in your mind this seal'.⁷⁹

Cyril mentions the imposition of hands⁸⁰ as a medium for the gift of the Spirit, for Moses and the seventy elders, and Peter.⁸¹ However, he will not divulge whether baptismal candidates will receive the same or something different in the *Catechetical Lectures*, nor is there mention of a ceremony for hand-laying in the *Mystagogical Catecheses*.

⁷⁴ 2 Cor. 1:22.

⁷⁵ Lk. 21:9.

⁷⁶ Cat. 1:2.

⁷⁷ Cat. 3:3.

⁷⁸ Cat. 3:3.

⁷⁹ Cat. 4:17.

⁸⁰ Cat. 16:26.

⁸¹ Acts 8:18.

Cyril concludes his eighteen *Catechetical Lectures* by announcing that forthcoming lectures will reveal the deeper meaning of: pre-baptismal forgiveness; water baptism as sharing in 'the Name of Christ' and 'the Seal of the fellowship of the Holy Ghost'; and the Eucharist.⁸² Four phases are strongly implied: pre-baptismal rites; baptism into Christ and sealing into the fellowship (κοινωνία) of his Church by the power of the Spirit, and finally Chrism connected with the New Covenant and the Eucharist. Clearly, 'sealing' is in the water of baptism, conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit, not Chrism.

In *Mystagogical Catecheses* neophytes learn that pre-baptismal anointing symbolizes stripping away the old self and purification. 'By the invocation of the Name of God'⁸³ the oil of exorcism contains the power to eradicate sin and ward off evil. De Bruyn⁸⁴ draws attention to a pre-baptismal formula discovered on a papyrus amulet (P.Rhyl III.471):

Holy oil of gladness against every hostile power and for the grafting of your good olive tree of the catholic and apostolic church of God. Amen

De Bruyn states that this prophylactic formula is first evidenced in the *Mystagogical Catecheses* 2:3 and describes the formula for total unction with exorcised oil. Although he argues that the writer of the papyrus was drawing on a Coptic tradition, he attributes the association between anointing to the 'cultivated olive' of Romans 11:24 to Cyril with reference to the 'abundance of the true olive' and 'exorcised oil' to protect from evil and enable sharing in Christ. This suggests a possibility that the need to anoint arose out of the association of oil with protection which originated in Coptic rites. De Bruyn provides further examples of the 'oil of gladness' in baptismal rites from Ethiopia, Arabia and Egypt. Although these do not necessarily pre-date the *Mystagogical Catecheses*, they substantiate the view that there is a pre-baptismal anointing formula in the prayer of P.Rhyl III.471 which later liturgists drew on. This may have been behind the emergence of a need

⁸² Cat. 18:33 Arguably, this text is a later insertion and not by Cyril. Day suggests it might be the addition of a copyist who, believing that Cyril was the writer of both sets of lectures, added it in for smoother continuity.

⁸³ MC. 2:3.

⁸⁴ De Bruyn, T. 'P.Ryl.III.471: A baptismal anointing formula used as an amulet' *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol 57, pt.1. (2006), p.94 – 109.

to anoint, which is evidenced in the *Mystagogical Catecheses*. If the importance De Bruyn attaches to early pre-baptismal anointing is fully accepted, it is arguable that anointing with Chrism might be sufficiently important to replace hand-laying in the *Mystagogical Catechesis*. However, it is difficult to disprove hand-laying altogether because of the ambiguity of the *Catechetical Lectures* and the *Mystagogical Catechesis*.

The first of the *Mystagogical Catecheses* uses imagery of Moses and the Passover and emphasizes baptism of repentance. *Mystagogical Catecheses* 2 emphasizes that through immersion initiates partake in the death and resurrection of Christ, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit share in his salvation. Baptism becomes effective through the imitation of Christ, in contrast to *Catechetical Lecture* 3 which has the baptismal water sanctified by the Spirit. *Mystagogical Catecheses* 3 reinforces what we have already seen in Tertullian's rites, that baptismal immersion is Christological rather than pneumatological and explains to the newly baptized that they have been received the unction which conforms them to 'the body of Christ's glory'. Here we have an explanation of the sacrament of baptism pointing the way to salvation.

Neophytes are told of the anointing they received on their heads and bodies, with oil that has been sanctified to impart Christ's 'Divine Nature'.⁸⁵ The imagery of Aaron's priestly anointing is used to describe 'the typical Chrism'.⁸⁶ That the soul is 'sanctified by the Holy and life giving Spirit' at Chrismation⁸⁷ suggests that anointing conveys the gift of the Spirit after purificatory rites have been performed and infers some flexibility about the moment the gift of the Spirit is conferred when compared with Cat.4:7 which implies that the water rite and 'seal' of the Spirit are simultaneous. The baptismal teaching outlined in the *Catechetical Lectures* and explained in the *Mystagogical Catecheses* evidences a new

⁸⁵ MC 3:5.

⁸⁶ MC 3:6.

⁸⁷ MC3:3.

development in sacramental theology. Despite some evident ambiguity,⁸⁸ this teaching provides a catechesis which represents the 'seal' as baptism in Christ and anointing with Chrism as taking on the *χαρακτήρ* of Christ. More than just an image for an external rite, the *res et sacramentum*, the symbolic reality of the sacrament, is thus beginning to be evidenced in teaching on *σφραγίς* and *χαρακτήρ*.

By the beginning of the fifth century the Antiochan tradition represented by Theodore of Mopsuestia demonstrated a pre-baptismal rite of sealing which conferred the initiate's appointment as a soldier of Christ. Post-baptismal anointing comprised sealing in the triune name and included the gift of the Holy Spirit. Arguably, the thinking of the *Mystagogical Catecheses* is closer to the post-immersion signing of Theodore than to the rites of Rome and Milan, but nonetheless, it does provide a reasonably clear and complete account with which to compare the *Apostolic Tradition* and the baptismal teaching of Ambrose.

*De Mysteriis, De Sacramentis,*⁸⁹

These two mystagogical addresses (dated around 380-390) represent the early baptismal liturgies of the Church of Milan and are claimed by some to provide the origins of the French and Spanish rites from Middle Ages.⁹⁰ Ambrose explains the rites of baptism, Chrism and Eucharist for those who have been baptized. Using examples from scripture and tradition, Ambrose demonstrates a similar theology of baptism to the *Mystagogical Catecheses* and draws parallels to Roman rites of the late fourth century. Johnson describes Ambrose as a 'credible witness to the Roman rite of his day'⁹¹ with a similar structure to

⁸⁸ On the understanding that it is unproven but likely that the *Mystagogical Catecheses* were written at a later date than the *Catechetical Lectures* and probably by a different author.

⁸⁹ Reference is also made to *De Spiritu Sancto*. Main sources: Ambrose, St. *De Mysteriis*, Schaff, P. and Wace, H. (eds) *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* volume X, Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark (no date); Whitaker *Baptismal liturgy*, (Whitaker uses the translation of Thompson, T. in Sprawley, J.H. (ed.); *St. Ambrose on the Sacraments and on the Mysteries*, London S.P.C.K. 1950).

⁹⁰ Duchesne, cited in Mitchell, L.L. 'Ambrosian Baptismal Rites' *Studia Liturgica* 1 (1962) p.241 – 253, points to a common Milanese origin for several Celtic and Gallican liturgies including the *Bobbio Missal* and the *Stowe Missal*. Mitchell also comments on similarities between the Ambrosian prayer for Chrismation and that in the *Gelesian Sacramentary*.

⁹¹ Johnson 'The Post Chrismational Structure' p.29.

that of the *Apostolic Tradition* 21.⁹² Ambrose describes water baptism as an image for dying and rising with Christ. He explains that the baptism of Christ testifies that 'water does not cleanse without the Spirit'⁹³ and refers to 'the water, the blood and the Spirit' as 'three witnesses in baptism'⁹⁴ with reference to the cross of Christ.⁹⁵ Baptismal washing is Christological with nothing to suggest that it confers the gift of the Spirit. Anointing with *μυρον*, which immediately follows immersion, is accompanied by a prayer that shows baptism for rebirth, forgiveness and into eternal life:⁹⁶

*Deus, Pater omnipotens, qui te regeneravit ex aqua et Spiritu concessitque, tibi peccata tua, ipse te unget in vitam aeternam.*⁹⁷

The following rite of 'sealing' (*spirital signaculum*) describes Chrismation as *perfectio*, a means of completing baptism and conferring the seven 'virtutes' of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁸ Many scholars have equated Ambrose's post-baptismal Chrismation with confirmation, but there are a few inconsistencies which make this questionable, not least that Ambrose does not specify a rite of hand-laying in connection with *spirital signaculum*. Schaff pre-empts interpretation of baptismal and post-baptismal rites as two separate sacraments in his introduction to *De Mysteriorum*, in which he names 'confirmation' as one of the sacraments covered in Ambrose's work.⁹⁹ Yarnold similarly describes Ambrose's Chrismation as 'confirmation' with the footnote that Ambrose refers to it as 'sealing'.¹⁰⁰ Jackson concluded that to equate Ambrose's *spirital signaculum* with modern confirmation on the grounds that both are separate from water rites, convey the Holy Spirit and perfect baptism,

⁹² A full investigation of extent to which the AT, the MC and Ambrose may have drawn on similar sources is outside the remit of this study, but it can be inferred from the investigation so far that late fourth to fifth century baptism rites in Rome and Milan owe their origins to a combination of initiatory rites from Eastern and Western traditions.

⁹³ *De Myst.* IV: 18.

⁹⁴ *De Myst.* IV: 20; 1 Jn 5:7.

⁹⁵ cf. Cyril's three day's burial.

⁹⁶ Nocent, 'Christian Initiation' p.23 points out that this prayer was retained until the Second Vatican Council.

⁹⁷ *De Sac.* 2:20.

⁹⁸ Ambrose refers to Isaiah 11:2 but Jackson (Jackson, Pamela 'The Meaning of *Spirital Signaculum* in the mystagogy of Ambrose of Milan' *Ecclesia Orans* 7 (1990) p.85.) says 'virtutes' is not the same as seven gifts and therefore not provable as confirmation.

⁹⁹ Schaff, P. and Wace, H. (eds) volume X, p.315.

¹⁰⁰ Yarnold, E., S.J., *The Awe Inspiring Rites of Initiation: Baptismal Homilies of the Fourth Century*, Slough, St. Paul Publications, 1972.

was too ‘elusive’.¹⁰¹ Johnson argues that Ambrose’s Chrismation is too ambiguous to be the origin of modern confirmation, Mitchell¹⁰² draws attention to apparent inconsistencies about whether the sign of the cross happens with the words of sealing or at post-baptismal anointing and Jackson says that Ambrose’s references are too varied to maintain a clear distinction between the Spirit’s external activity in water-rites and indwelling conferred during a later rite.

Ambrose’s rites need to be examined in their own historical and theological context to find out what they can tell us about the evolution of the sacramental ‘seal of the Spirit’.

Distinctly different from post-baptismal anointing, Chrismation and ‘sealing’ takes place after the newly baptized have been anointed, had their feet washed and been dressed in white garments. We can agree with Lampe¹⁰³ who says that Ambrose sees the Holy Spirit as active in regeneration during water baptism and anointing, and conferring seven gifts in post baptismal Chrismation.¹⁰⁴ However this does not fully account for Ambrose’s references to ‘sealing’ as ‘perfecting’ baptism nor ‘sealing’ into the dignity of Christ as priest, prophet and king. ‘Sealing’ is set in its Old Testament context with reference to the Song of Songs:

*Pone me ut signaculum in cor tuum, ut sigillum in brachium tuum...*¹⁰⁵

Moreover, Ambrose’s seal is clearly an image of the indwelling Spirit. ...*pone me ut signaculum in cor tuum, quo fides tua pleno fulgeat sacramento*¹⁰⁶. So we need to look more closely at *accepisti signaculum spiritale*¹⁰⁷ in relation to the series of baptismal rites, and the centrality Ambrose apportions to the presence of the Spirit in the lives of the newly baptized, by examining how he explains ‘sealing’ through Paul:

¹⁰¹ Jackson, ‘*Spiritale Signaculum*’ p.77 – 94.

¹⁰² Mitchell, ‘Ambrosian Baptismal Rites.’ *Studia Liturgica* 1 (1962) 241-253.

¹⁰³ Lampe ‘Seal of the Spirit’ p.299.

¹⁰⁴ De Myst. VII:42 quotes from Isa 11:2. De Myst. VII:41 is also quoted in CCC 1303 in relation to confirmation.

¹⁰⁵ Song of Songs 8:6 quoted in De Myst. VII:41.

¹⁰⁶ De Myst. VII:41.

¹⁰⁷ De Sac. II:7.

God the Father has sealed you, Christ the Lord strengthened you and gave you the earnest of the Spirit in your heart, as you have learnt in the lesson from the Apostle.¹⁰⁸

Ambrose explains that 'we are sealed by the Holy Spirit, not by nature, but by God'.¹⁰⁹ He states that sealing is by the indwelling Spirit not the water. Ambrose quotes from Ephesians 1:13-14 and 4:30 to explain what God has done. Neophytes have died with Christ and are reborn, they have received the *spiritalis signaculum* in their hearts which is the image and grace of Christ. Thus Ambrose explains that through baptism Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit, in conformity to the Son by the Father.

Whilst we see the external rites in the liturgical action of water baptism and post-baptismal anointing as *sacramentum tantum*, Ambrose's Chrismation and 'sealing' is arguably an example of *res et sacramentum*; it bestows the *χαρακτηρ* of Christ and as such is a spiritual effect which confirms the grace conferred by the sacrament which has already happened. Furthermore it acts as a *missa* rite of transition from baptism to the Eucharist. In conclusion the way to understand the 'elusive' nature of Ambrose's 'seal of the Spirit' lies not in trying to equate it with a separate rite that is a forerunner of modern confirmation but to consider its place in an integrated series of rites that constitute baptism.

Conclusion

The investigation of baptismal rites from the first to fifth centuries AD has revealed a non-linear trail of liturgical evolution in which themes of 'sealing' play a distinguishing role. Sources from different regions across East and West have provided a valuable witness to a developing theology which has been most clearly established around the end of the fourth to the beginning of the fifth century in the *Mystagogical Catecheses* and the writings of Ambrose.

¹⁰⁸ De Myst. VII:42 recalling 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5.

¹⁰⁹ De Spiritu Sancto I:78.

Baptism in its simplest liturgical form consisted of repentance, a statement of faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit through water rites. The absence of a full account of the development of confirmation handed down from the apostles, and represented in texts such as the *Didache* means there is no explicit continuity in accounts of what baptismal and post-baptismal rites achieve. Although there is diversity over when and how anointing became attached to baptism, the attachment of rites of anointing has increased uniformity in the process of baptism. As rites became more complex so a way to explain them through catechesis and mystagogy evolved. The baptism of Christ became explicit as the model for Christian baptism and Pauline imagery of baptism as dying and rising with Christ became central to explain baptism as putting on Christ. Whereas pre-baptismal rites were purificatory, Old Testament images of anointing as priest prophet and king explained post-baptismal anointing into the eschatological kingship of Christ, often described by the vocabulary of 'sealing'. Hence we have the evolution of the sacramental 'seal' of Paul as a catechetical and mystagogical concept explained through σφραγίς and σφραγίζω, χαρακτήρ as the imprint of Christ and ἀρραβών the down-payment of the Holy Spirit on future salvation. Ambrose was able to connect 'sealing' further to the Song of Songs to describe the effects of baptism. Whilst it is unlikely that Paul would have had the Song of Songs in mind when he used σφραγίζω in connection with the Spirit, it is likely that Ambrose was able to make the connections he did because the Pauline 'seal' had remained central to explaining baptism.

But the sacramental 'seal' remains elusive. Although Winkler¹¹⁰ maintains that early Syriac sources refer to pre-baptismal anointing into the dignity of Christ as the Messiah, we cannot attribute all traditions of baptismal anointing to Syrian sources as it is apparent that there was an exchange of traditions between Syria, Africa and the West.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Winkler, 'The Original Meaning' p.24-45.

¹¹¹ Tertullian is an early witness to post-baptismal anointing in the Latin African tradition which is probably too early to have originated from the Syriac tradition.

A lack of cohesiveness concerning the moment the Holy Spirit was conferred at baptism is evident from the liturgies discussed so far. Although this is seen by some scholars as a problem it does point to the need to look at baptismal rites in a holistic sense. The sense in which pre-baptismal anointing followed secondly by immersion in the three-fold name and thirdly by rites of Chrismation and 'sealing' form a cohesive whole is essential to understanding Christian initiation in the third to fifth centuries. To understand what it meant to 'be sealed' and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in the fourth and fifth centuries it is also essential to consider 'sealing' in the context of baptism and Chrismation together. It is difficult to imagine when Paul wrote 'you also... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance' (Eph.1:13-14) that he was referring to anything less than the whole transforming and eschatological effect of receiving the Spirit. Post-baptismal rites and post-Chrismational sealing are best understood as part of the whole process of Christian initiation. Because 'sealing' remains baptism in the New Testament and many of the Fathers, we can best understand the seal of confirmation through baptism. Lampe and Heron¹¹² equate 'sealing' to baptism as a rite of entry into the Christian community and see hand-laying as the significant gesture which denotes confirmation. To understand 'sealing' as baptism fully we must accept the integrated and variable series of rites in the Fathers as a whole sacrament of the gift of the Holy Spirit, pointing to salvation. The meaning of '*Accipe signaculum Doni Spiritus Sancti*' lies in investigating emerging separate rites of confirmation in the context of baptism. This investigation shows how early Christian catechetical and mystagogical materials, in particular those of Ambrose and those attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, bring meaning and scriptural imagery together. They contain a rich catechetical resource which has the potential to enable today's candidates for confirmation to understand confirmation more fully by understanding what happened to them as baptism through centring on the image of the 'seal of the Spirit'.

¹¹² Heron, J. 'Christian Initiation' *Studia Liturgica* 1 (1962) p.44.

An Investigation into the Development of 'Sealing' in Christian Liturgy from the Fifth Century to the Second Council of Lyons (1274)

This investigation looks at the main landmarks of the evolutionary journey of post-baptismal sealing from St. Augustine up to and including St. Thomas Aquinas. Augustine is grouped with Aquinas rather than Ambrose because Augustine's argument is essential to understanding the position taken in the thirteenth century by Aquinas on the relation between the sacramental 'seal' and χαρακτηρ in confirmation. Some 'hybrid'¹¹³ baptismal liturgies from the eighth-century are included to track the traditional and liturgical practice of 'sealing' between Augustine and Aquinas. The argument is maintained that 'sealing' has to be understood by looking at baptismal rites as a whole, with respect to the historical and theological context in which they were set. The application of 'sealing' to confirmation, by the time confirmation was documented as a separate sacrament,¹¹⁴ is considered with regard to its theological roots in baptism and liturgical association to Chrism.

St. Augustine¹¹⁵

The received patristic tradition of 'sealing' drawn upon by the Mediaeval Western Church owes much to the fifth century work of St. Augustine. Becker¹¹⁶ affirms that out of all the Latin Fathers Ambrose has shaped Christian understanding of the gift of the Spirit and Augustine provides an explanation of the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Augustine draws on Old and New Testament imagery to explain the meaning of 'seal'.¹¹⁷

Standing in the Latin African tradition of Tertullian, he shows the late fourth to mid-fifth

¹¹³ Whitaker uses the term 'hybrid' to describe documents of mixed Roman and Gallican (including German) origin (Whitaker, 1970 p.166).

¹¹⁴ Although confirmation was frequently discussed as a separate sacrament during the thirteenth century, the reunion Council of Lyons 1274 is taken as definitive moment of its documentation.

¹¹⁵ Sources: Schaff, P. (ed) *A Select Library of the Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark (no date) in <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf104>; Turner, P. *Sources of Confirmation from the Fathers through the Reformers*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1993.

¹¹⁶ Becker, K.J. 'Le don de la confirmation,' *La Maison Dieu*, 168, (1986) p.22.

¹¹⁷ For example the 'seal' signifies protection: the Passover 'seal' is used to explain that Christians 'have Christ's seal on the forehead'; it is the 'seal' of Christ's blood that protects Christians from 'the destroyer'. Tractate 50, Chapter 11, 55:2 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf107.iii.li.html>; Augustine quotes from Ephesians 1:13 (Anti-Pelagian Writings 1:39) and 4:30 (Anti-Pelagian Writings 1:46), and 2 Timothy 2:16-

century church reasserting its sacramental teaching by a new purpose: refuting the Donatists' assertions over the rebaptism of those who had lapsed from the Christian faith.¹¹⁸ This prompted a clearer vision of what was achieved by baptism and Chrismation, to defend the church's teaching on why baptism could not be repeated. Conferred during the process of baptism, the 'seal' remains present regardless of whether or not an individual stays faithful. Augustine deals with this concept of 'sealing' and the character it confers by using the term 'sacrament' rather than with explicit use of the language of 'sealing' and character:

St. Augustine held that besides the outward rite that imposed the mark there was a deeper, and more permanent, reality which he called the 'sacrament'; a permanent effect which is, however, independent of personal merit.¹¹⁹

This explanation is entirely consistent with Augustine's message that administration of the sacrament alone confers this mark and that to be baptized is to 'have put on Christ'.¹²⁰ The 'sacrament' is given through blessed Chrism:

Baptism and water have come. You have been penetrated as it were so you may come to the form of bread. But it is not yet bread without fire. What therefore does fire represent? It is Chrism. For the oil of our fire is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit.¹²¹

Augustine refers to the imposition of hands 'But that the Holy Spirit is said to be given to the Catholic Church alone through the imposition of the hand', although he clarifies that the imposition of hands alone is 'a prayer over a person' and cannot confer the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹²² Augustine regards post-baptismal Chrismation as the spiritual strengthening for Christian life and defines how this shall happen:

What is the sign of Christ that everyone knows but the cross of Christ? Unless this sign is administered either on the foreheads of believers, or on the water from which they are reborn, or on the oil by which they are anointed with Chrism, or on

21 (Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists Book 3 chapter 19) the 'seal' signifies belonging to Christ. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf104>.

¹¹⁸ Augustine, St. *Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists* <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf104>.

¹¹⁹ Schillebeeckx E., O.P., *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* New York: Sheed and Ward 1963 p.156.

¹²⁰ Augustine quotes Galatians 3:27 in Augustine St. *Against the Manichaeans and Donatists* Book 1 chapter 16 and chapter 19. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf104>.

¹²¹ Augustine, St. *Sermon 227:1* Turner, P. *Sources of Confirmation* no. 10.

¹²² Augustine, St. *On Baptism* 3:16 21 (Turner *Sources of Confirmation* no.50).

the sacrifice by which they are nourished - none of these is accomplished correctly.¹²³

It is testimony to the work of Augustine, that some of the earliest evidence of confirmation becoming separated from baptism included the same injunction that it was a sacrament that could not be repeated. Although it would be another eight hundred years before confirmation was defined in church teaching as a sacrament in its own right, the Council of Orange (441) echoes Augustine and addresses disparity over the meaning of Chrismation in its time. Furthermore, early use of the term *confirmatio* to describe Chrismation evidences the belief from some that it was just a 'blessing' and implies that for others confirmation conferred something that water baptism alone didn't.

But the society was changing. Baptism was beginning to take place outside the Easter tridium, possibly because of a high rate of mortality coupled with the belief that baptism was necessary for salvation. Priests were beginning to preside over baptism although Chrismation was being delayed because of the need to wait for a visit from the bishop. This became a significant reason for the separation of baptism and confirmation in the Western church by the Middle Ages.

Baptismal Liturgies of the Eighth Century

The Western Church in Europe provides evidence of several rites of sealing in liturgies of baptism and Chrismation, some of which were written in Rome and arguably indicative of tradition that would have developed as a result of rites such as those recorded in the *Apostolic Tradition*. De Clerk¹²⁴ states that it was commonplace to postpone post-baptismal episcopal rites as early as the mid-fifth century in Gaul. During the seventh century the rite of Chrismation was retained for administration by the bishop in Rome. This compounded the problem of many baptisms and few Chrismations. De Clerk¹²⁵ points

¹²³ Augustine, St. *Tract on the Gospel of John*, 118, 5 (Turner *Sources of Confirmation* no.156).

¹²⁴ De Clerk, Paul, 'Towards a Consensus on Confirmation?' *Studia Liturgica* 26 (1996) p.190-201.

¹²⁵ De Clerk, P. 'La dissociation du baptême et de la confirmation au haut moyen âge', *La Maison Dieu*, 168, (1986) p.57, 58.

out that only the bishop could invoke the Spirit for consignation. He cites Gy to suggest that the bishop would apparently manage large numbers of initiates on his occasional visits to rural parishes by ‘confirming’ from the back of his horse. This strongly suggests that ‘confirmation’ prior to the eighth century could be conferred solely by the imposition of hands; it highlights a move in the Western Church towards dissociating confirmation from baptism and implies a need for a clearly documented theology of initiation.

This section examines the theology of the ‘seal of the Spirit’ in relation to liturgy for Chrismation and confirmation. It examines rites of blessing of the oil of Chrism and consignation during the eighth century and asks when did post-baptismal Chrismation include the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and what did the church think was achieved by anointing with Chrism?

The Gelasian Sacramentary¹²⁶

Written in Rome and probably brought to France around 750, this text is likely to be the product of several editions; Nocent¹²⁷ cautions that it must be used with awareness of new Gallican elements overlaying the Roman original.

The consecration of the oil of Chrism recalls Moses anointing Aaron and the baptism of Christ.¹²⁸ Infused with the Holy Spirit, it becomes ‘the Chrism of salvation’¹²⁹ for the newly baptized, which suggests both that ordinary oil would not suffice and that salvation depends on water baptism having already taken place. The same prayer associates Chrism

¹²⁶ Sources: Mohlberg, L.C. (ed) *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae Odinis Anni Circuli* (*Sacramentum Gelasianum*) Rome: Herder 1960; Whitaker, *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*, p.166 – 196. The popular term ‘Gelasian Sacramentary’ describes the Vatican Document *Reginensis 316*. It is dated around the mid- eighth century although some of the original Latin texts would be earlier. The name of Pope Gelasius is sometimes mistakenly attributed to this text. Quotations below are from Whitaker’s translated text unless otherwise stated.

¹²⁷ Nocent, Adrien, O.S.B. ‘Christian Initiation in the Roman Church from the Fifth Century until Vatican II.’ Anscar J. Chupungco, O.S.B. (ed.) *Handbook for Liturgical Studies. Volume IV: Sacraments and Sacramentals* Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2000. p. 49-90.

¹²⁸ Gel. XL 65 quotes Mk. 1:11.

¹²⁹ Gel. XL 65.

to Christ 'from whose holy Name Chrism took its name'¹³⁰ and to anointing priests, kings, prophets and martyrs. This Christological interpretation shows 'sealing' linked to the name of Christ through signing with the cross and 'sealing' into the dignity of Christ as priest, prophet and king. The similarity of the first of the current prayers for the consecration of the Chrism¹³¹ to this Gelasian prayer reveals its significance to the evolution of the 'seal of the Spirit'.

The *Gelasian Sacramentary* provides a Latin rite of post-baptismal Chrismation for infants. Immediately after baptism they are 'sealed by the bishop' which confers 'the seven gifts of grace of the Holy Spirit'.¹³²

The bishop states, as he anoints the newly baptized, that they have already been forgiven, reborn in baptismal water and they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, which identifies 'sealing' with Chrismation:

Almighty God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has made thee to be regenerated of *water and the Holy Spirit* [John 3:5], has given thee remission of all thy sins, himself anoints thee with the Chrism of salvation in Christ Jesus unto eternal life.¹³³

The baptismal Chrism is administered to 'seal' what has happened in the water.

Furthermore, the seven gifts are conferred and 'sealed' by the imposition of the bishop's hands after anointing:

The seven-fold spirit is given to them by the bishop. To seal them [*ad consignandum*], he lays his hands upon them.¹³⁴

The matter of Chrismation is anointing followed by the imposition of hands. The form is the bishop's words which include invocation of the Holy Spirit:¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Gel. XL 65.

¹³¹ 'Rite for Consecration of the Chrism' *The Rites of the Catholic Church as revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council* New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1976 p.515.

¹³² Gel. XLIII 88.

¹³³ Gel. XLIV 94.

¹³⁴ Gel. XLIV 95.

¹³⁵ The terms *matter* and *form* would not have been used in the eighth century. They are examples of the philosophical vocabulary of Aristotle which was used to explain the sacraments by Aquinas in the 13th century. *Matter* describes gesture and materials, and *form* as the words.

...do thou Lord send upon them thy Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and godliness, and fill them with the spirit of fear [Isaiah 11:2f] of God in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ...¹³⁶

The newly baptized are then signed with Chrism on the forehead with the bishop's words 'The sign of Christ unto life eternal' to which the candidate replies 'Amen'.¹³⁷ This post-Chrismational 'sealing' and manumission, conferred individually, is the consignation that eventually becomes confirmation. The seven gifts of the Spirit, implicit in Ambrose have become explicit.

Johnson¹³⁸ draws parallels between the bishop's post-Chrismational hand-laying prayer in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* and those of the *Apostolic Tradition* 21 and *De Sacramentis* III 8-9. De Clerk states that the final of three baptismal rites in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* is a 'new formula' comprising immediate unction by the bishop and clothing. He quotes from the *Gelasian Sacramentary* to point out the condition that 'if the bishop is present',¹³⁹ confirmation will take place immediately with Chrism. This suggests the possibility baptism might otherwise happen without consignation, which indicates a starker division between baptism and Chrismation than in earlier liturgies.

The consignation depicted in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* shows that rites involving 'sealing' confer the gift of the Holy Spirit. A stronger emphasis on the salvific purpose of 'sealing' presents an unusual situation: it might appear that the sacrament of baptism now implies two gifts of the Holy Spirit, for different purposes. The Holy Spirit is conferred on the candidate at baptism, and clearly the Western Church in its more authentic witnesses never wanted to dissociate the Spirit from baptism. Now, the process is completed by the gift of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of the seven 'graces', ratified by the final rite of anointing on the forehead. The bishop's words '*signum Christi in vitam*

¹³⁶ Gel. XLIV 95.

¹³⁷ Gel. XLIV 96.

¹³⁸ Johnson 'PostChrismational Structure'.

¹³⁹ Edition Dumas (n° 702-714) quoted in De Clerk 'Haut Moyen Âge' p.56 (quotation translated from French).

*aeternam*¹⁴⁰ express ‘sealing’ for salvation and remind us of close association between *signaculum*, σφραγίς and ἀρραβών.

Ordo Romanus XI¹⁴¹

The earliest of several *ordines romani*, this eighth century text includes detailed baptismal rites with distinct roles for priests, deacons and the pontiff. Seven scrutinies take place during Lent to prepare the candidates to receive each of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit on Holy Saturday which indicates that rites now associated with confirmation were seen as an integral part of baptism. At the Easter Vigil, the priest mingles the Chrism and water, and sprinkles it on the font and the congregation and distributes it. These actions show that the water was understood to contain the power of the Holy Spirit and suggests the modern practice of distributing the blessed water.

During baptism, according to the *Ordo Romanus XI*, infants are signed with Chrism in a cross on their heads by a priest¹⁴² after which the pontiff prays over them ‘confirming them with an invocation of the seven-fold grace of the Holy Spirit’.¹⁴³ Each candidate is anointed with Chrism on the forehead, with the sign of the cross and the words:

*In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti. Pax tibi.*¹⁴⁴

Emphasis on rites involving Chrism during and after baptism shows the interdependence of baptismal rites. The instruction that follows post-baptismal Chrismation and describes it suggests that post-baptismal anointing is sometimes separated from the whole process of baptism:

*Et hoc omnino praecavendum est ut hoc non neglegatur, quia tunc omne baptismum legitimum christianitatis nomine confirmatur.*¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Gel. XLIV.

¹⁴¹ Sources: Whitaker *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy* p.196 -204; Andrieu, M. (ed.) *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age*. Volume II, Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense (no date).

¹⁴² The pontiff baptizes ‘one or two infants’ and an appointed deacon baptizes the others (*Ordo Romanus XI* 96).

¹⁴³ O XI 100.

¹⁴⁴ O XI 101.

¹⁴⁵ O XI 102.

Thus, post-baptismal anointing is a *missa* rite which ‘seals’ or completes baptism, marking initiation into the Christian community to receive the Eucharist. The language of ‘sealing’ indicates that it is taking on importance in addition to baptism: *signare* is used for signing with the cross and the pre-baptismal rite of *effeta* but the final rite of anointing uses *confirmare*¹⁴⁶ and clearly equates to ‘sealing’ or ratifying the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The Bobbio Missal¹⁴⁷

Copied in Gaul at the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century, the *Bobbio Missal* combines a sacramentary, lectionary and other material. It includes a pre-baptismal rite in which the bishop breathes into the candidate’s mouth three times and states ‘*Accipe spiritum sanctum in cor retenias*’.¹⁴⁸

Placed before the rites of exorcism, this conferring of the Holy Spirit appears to be inconsistent with liturgical understanding of the sacramental gift of the Spirit. Prayers and imagery of the divine Spirit on the waters of creation follow in the blessing of baptismal water which suggests that this early breathing of the Holy Spirit is connected to the ‘living Spirit’ of Genesis 2:7. ‘*In cor retenias*’ connects to ‘Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God’ (Eph. 4:30), and shows that the initiate is expected to guard the precious gift rather than exemplifying the seal’s protective role.

After references to the baptism of Christ and the ‘*spiritum adoptionis*’¹⁴⁹ it is explained that water baptism includes rebirth in the Holy Spirit, forgiveness of sins and salvation:

... *omnipotens deus Qui aperuisti nobis fontem vite aeternae et regenerasti nos per spiritum tuum sanctum quem ducem esse huius sancti lauacri in remissione peccatorum et fieris lauacrum aquae in spirit sancto...*¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ O XI 100.

¹⁴⁷ Sources: Whitaker *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy* p.204 – 212; Lowe, E.A. *The Bobbio Missal: A Gallican Mass Book* London 1920.

¹⁴⁸ B 233.

¹⁴⁹ B 235 quotes Rom. 8:15.

¹⁵⁰ B 237.

The bishop pours Chrism into the water and makes the sign of the cross. The candidates are then exorcized and anointed 'with sanctified oil'.¹⁵¹ They are then baptized and receive Chrism poured over their heads:

*Deus Pater Domini nostri Iesu Christi qui te regeneravit per aqua et Spiritu Sancto quicquid tibi dedit remissione peccatorum per lauacrum regenerationis et sanguine ipse te linit crismate suo sancto in vitam aeternam.*¹⁵²

Post-baptismal rites can be seen to complete what has happened in baptism and confer something that baptism does not. However these are not illustrated by the seven gifts of Isaiah 11:2-3 in the *Bobbio Missal*. The effect of Chrismation begins to be understood as 'strengthening' in the way of perfecting' what has already happened in baptism. These observations contribute both to an understanding of baptismal liturgies of their time and to the origins of the sacrament of confirmation.

*The Stowe Missal*¹⁵³

Written from Latin, Irish and possibly Milanese sources, the eighth century *Stowe Missal* contains a pre-baptismal rite of anointing with Chrism.¹⁵⁴ After exorcism, anointing with oil of Chrism rather than oil of catechumens marks the end of the catechumenate period,¹⁵⁵ beginning of the process of baptism. This demonstrates the flexibility attached to Chrismation represented in 'hybrid' liturgies. After further rites of exorcism, invocation of the Holy Spirit recalls the creative spirit (Gen. 1:2)¹⁵⁶ and the Pauline '*spiritum adoptionis*' (Rom. 8:15).¹⁵⁷ The baptismal water is blessed with reference to the baptism of Christ and the miracle at Cana¹⁵⁸ with the invocation that the Holy Spirit will sanctify the water 'with regenerating power'.¹⁵⁹ The celebrant pours Chrism into the water in the sign of the cross

¹⁵¹ B 242 It is not explicit whether 'sanctified oil' refers here to Chrism or oil of exorcism.

¹⁵² B 249.

¹⁵³ Source: Whitaker *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy* p.213 – 221, Warner, G. (ed.) *The Stowe Missal*. Volume II, London, 1915.

¹⁵⁴ S 16.

¹⁵⁵ S 16.

¹⁵⁶ S 23.

¹⁵⁷ S 21.

¹⁵⁸ S 24.

¹⁵⁹ S 25.

and candidates are baptized by triple immersion. Post-baptismal anointing occurs immediately after, linked to water baptism with a prayer:

*Deus omnipotens pater Domini nostri Iesu Christi qui te regenerauit ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto quique tibi dedit remissionem omnium peccatorum ipse te lineat crismate salutis in Christo.*¹⁶⁰

This prayer unites the two rites with a linked sense of purpose: water baptism signifies regeneration and anointing is for salvation. At this point candidates are anointed in the three-fold name. The prayer of anointing reflects the emphasis on exorcism that defines the baptismal rites of the *Stowe Missal*:

*Operare creatura olei operare in nomine Dei Patris omnipotentis et Filii et Spiritus Sancti ut non lateat hic spiritus imundus nec in membris, nec in medullis, nec in compaginibus membrorum sed operetur in te uirtis Christi Filii Dei uiui altissimi et Spiritus Sancti per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.*¹⁶¹

This anointing is supported by rites of receiving a white garment, signing with a cross on the right hand and the washing of feet. Whitaker states that the inclusion of foot washing and accompanying questions and answers indicate that the provision is for adult baptism which suggests that the compiler of the missal was drawing on an early Gallican source.¹⁶² The lack of reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit or seven graces show that post-baptismal Chrismation was not necessarily linked to being 'sealed' with the gift of the Holy Spirit and illustrates that the emergence of confirmation as a separate sacrament was a gradual, non-linear process. De Clerk states that the term 'confirmation' first came into use during the fifth century with reference to 'strengthening for combat' in the Pentecost homily of Faustus of Riez.¹⁶³ Winkler considers the liturgical language of Gallican post-baptismal rites to conclude that the terms *confirmare* and *confirmatio* do not appear in the earlier liturgies which originated from the north and east of Gaul. Where they occur in a juridical sense in the context of post-baptismal anointing in the south they are used to express

¹⁶⁰ S 28 *ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto* (Jn 3:5).

¹⁶¹ S 31.

¹⁶² Whitaker *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*, p.221.

¹⁶³ De Clerk, 'Consensus?' p.194.

‘strengthening’ or ‘perfecting’ in the sense of *missa* or baptismal completion.¹⁶⁴ At this stage *confirmatio* was not used to express ‘sealing’ with the Spirit.

The Byzantine Rite¹⁶⁵

The Eastern Church evidences how concepts and rites of sealing were developing in a united process of baptismal rites followed by the Eucharist. The *Barberini Euchologion* testifies to liturgy and practice in Constantinople during the eighth century. *Barberini Euchologion* 2 includes a prayer for ‘sealing’ an infant at eight days old. The words ‘let the light of thy countenance be marked upon this servant and let the cross of thy Only-Begotten Son be marked in his heart and in his thoughts’¹⁶⁶ suggest that ‘sealing’ marks with the image of Christ and the imprint of his cross. ‘Sealing’ requires responsibility on behalf of the initiate to keep the ‘seal’ intact; to do this he is strengthened by the sacrament he will receive. Language and rites of sealing are much more commonplace within the Byzantine rites than in the Latin-Gallican liturgies and seem to fit more easily into the whole process of catechesis and baptism. The celebrant ‘signs’ the water crosswise with his finger, he ‘seals’ the oil of Chrism three times to consecrate it. The parallels to Western liturgies that record the mingling of Chrism and baptismal water¹⁶⁷ illustrate the unity of rites for water baptism and Chrismation which still existed between the East and West in the eighth century. Winkler points out that it is especially apparent in the Eastern tradition and the *Bobbio Missal* that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not confined to the moment of Chrismation, which is ‘perceived only as the highpoint of initiation’.¹⁶⁸

The close connection between baptism and confirmation was perhaps indicated by the use of Chrism in blessing baptismal water, a use only discontinued in 1970 in Western rites. In

¹⁶⁴ Winkler, G. ‘Confirmation or Chrismation? A Study in Comparative Liturgy’ Johnson, M.E. (Ed) *Living Water, Sealing Spirit. Readings on Christian Initiation*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1995 p.203.

¹⁶⁵ Source: *The Barberini Euchologion* in Whitaker, *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*, p.69 – 82.

¹⁶⁶ *Barberini Euchologion* 2 foll 170 ff (Whitaker *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*, p.73).

¹⁶⁷ O XI 94; S 26.

¹⁶⁸ Winkler, ‘Confirmation or Chrismation?’ p.203.

the Byzantine liturgy the rite of post-baptismal anointing with Chrism includes the bishop's words:

The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit¹⁶⁹

Grisbrooke describes the Byzantine rite of post-baptismal anointing as 'the sacrament of Chrismation (corresponding to the Western confirmation)'.¹⁷⁰ Whilst there is no explicit teaching on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, nor is this the moment of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Byzantine rite demonstrates Chrismation that is perfecting baptism and is in form almost unchanged in the Western new 'Rite of Confirmation'.

Conclusion

A brief examination of key eighth century European baptismal liturgies has revealed a general pattern of core rites of water baptism and post-baptismal anointing. Accompanying supporting rites can, in present times, be seen to have been transferred to a different liturgy (washing of feet) or attached to baptism (white garment and candle) or confirmation. Mitchell¹⁷¹ states that the presence of foot washing in Ambrose, but not in Roman rites, evidences the Milanese influence on later Gallican rites, the *Bobbio Missal* and *Stowe Missal*.

Chrism is still widely used as it is attached to water baptism and post-baptismal anointing in the *Bobbio Missal* and *Stowe Missal*, but clearly emerges as a rite to prefigure confirmation in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* and the *Ordo Romanus* XI, in line with the Eastern tradition. Post-baptismal anointing in the West is inconsistent about including the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Lack of consistency over the seven gifts, which are central to Ambrose, clearly demarcated in the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, but missing from the liturgies in the *Bobbio Missal* and *Stowe Missal* suggest that the Milanese influence is not conclusive. It is evident that the liturgical 'seal' of the gift of the Holy Spirit remains part

¹⁶⁹ *Barberini Euchologion* 2 foll 170 ff (Whitaker *Documents of Baptismal Liturgy*, p.82).

¹⁷⁰ Grisbrooke, W.J. 'The Byzantine Rite' in Jones, C, Wainwright, G and Yarnold E., S.J., (eds) *The Study of the Liturgy*, London: S.P.C.K. 1978 p.119.

¹⁷¹ Mitchell 'Ambrosian Rites' p.249.

of baptism. The extent to which it was also attached to post-baptismal anointing and episcopal hand-laying varied between different rites. The liturgies discussed above suggest a continued series of baptismal rites with the theme of 'sealing' variously extended to post-baptismal Chrismation, rather than a separate confirmation. Liturgy during the eighth century was too varied to elicit a single route for confirmation to appear as a separate sacrament characterized by the 'seal of the Spirit'. However, it was evident that by this time a new and separate rite of episcopal hand-laying had emerged in many places. So how did baptismal Chrismation and episcopal hand-laying become united in the sacrament of confirmation?

Martos states that the 'French explanation of confirmation became the accepted Catholic view'¹⁷² during the ninth to twelfth centuries. This view accounts for the increase in the practice of priests baptizing and people returning to have the baptism 'confirmed' by an episcopal blessing when the bishop paid a visit to the parish. However, Martos' view does not do justice to the diversity of the Gallican tradition that has been identified by looking at the different 'hybrid' liturgies. Logistically confirmation was emerging as a separate sacrament, but theologically there was little attention paid to the significance of episcopal anointing. Evidence would suggest that the Church thought anointing with Chrism marked the completion and authentication of initiation rites rather than necessarily conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Despite a widening gap between baptism and episcopal rites in many places, the evolution of the 'seal of the Holy Spirit', attached to rites and traditions of baptismal Chrismation, remained fairly constant throughout the ninth to twelfth centuries. Augustine's insistence that the sacrament of baptism could not be repeated was upheld and the Church was beginning to understand that the 'sealing' of Chrismation achieved something else that

¹⁷² Martos, J. *Doors to the Sacred, A historical introduction to sacraments in the Catholic Church, USA: Ligouri/Triumph* 2001 p.194.

baptism alone did not. It is these two key points that underpin the next developmental phase of the 'seal of the Spirit' in scholastic theology.

The Theology of 'sealing' in Confirmation in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

To investigate the evolution of 'sealing' around the time that confirmation was agreed as a sacrament in its own right we must consider at what point post-baptismal Chrismation became a sacrament conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit and how the term *confirmatio* became attached to anointing with Chrism. Concepts of σφραγίς and σφραγίζω are also examined in relation to χαρακτήρ to identify what the Church wants people to understand by 'an indelible spiritual mark, the "character", which is a sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the "seal of his Spirit"'.¹⁷³

During the twelfth century Peter Lombard's widely acclaimed *Book of Sentences* identified confirmation as a separate sacrament from baptism. Lombard stated that a 'sacrament' had to be both a cause and a sign of grace. For Lombard, like Augustine, the outward rite imposed the mark (*sacramentum tantum*) and was accompanied by a more permanent spiritual indwelling (*res sacramenti*). The 'seal' was part of the exterior and ecclesial rite, whilst the interior effects and grace were seen as something separate. Whilst this separation of effects was maintained, it appears that understanding of what confirmation provided, that baptism did not, was incomplete:

Now something must be added concerning the sacrament of confirmation, by what power it is accustomed to be obtained. For the form has been disclosed - namely, the words which the bishop says when he signs the baptized on their foreheads with the sacred Chrism.¹⁷⁴

From a mediaeval perspective, it is likely that pseudo-Dionysius suggested to Aquinas and the Council of Trent that anointing was brought in by the Apostles earlier than it really was.¹⁷⁵ Although *Objection 1* states that Acts 8:17 refers to hand-laying not anointing, Aquinas explains that Christ could give the Spirit without matter because of his power. In

¹⁷³ CCC 1304.

¹⁷⁴ Lombard, Peter *The Book of Sentences* 4:7, 1 (Source: Turner 1993 no. 135).

¹⁷⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius was believed to be the Dionysius referred to in Acts 17:34.

the same way, the Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, had ‘no need for sacramental sensible matter’.¹⁷⁶ Aquinas recognizes that Acts 8:17 refers to hand-laying not anointing but explains that he sees confirmation as a sacrament because it confers grace and strengthening following the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism.¹⁷⁷ Aquinas states that *Chrism is the matter for confirmation because it signifies the grace of the Holy Spirit with reference to Christ ‘anointed with the oil of gladness’.*¹⁷⁸

Aquinas uses the metaphor of a soldier’s seal of identity and the term ‘character’ to draw the two aspects of a sacrament together. ‘Character’ refers to ‘a certain spiritual seal’¹⁷⁹ which is both a sacramental sign and a spiritual power:

Character is properly speaking a certain kind of seal by which something is marked off as ordained to some end, just as a coin is imprinted with a character ordaining it for use in commerce, and soldiers are sealed with a character inasmuch as they are deputed for military service.¹⁸⁰

The imprint made by the ‘seal’ is crucial to understanding how Aquinas interpreted ‘sacrament’ and the meaning of the ‘seal’ of confirmation at the time it was documented by the Church as a separate sacrament.¹⁸¹ The outward rite of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and holy orders relate to the visible, ecclesial community and the interior effects to sharing in the priesthood of Christ. So how does this explain the meaning of the ‘seal of the Spirit’ in the sacrament of confirmation? Aquinas’s teaching on ‘character’ must be considered on the understanding that σφραγίς means both the instrument of sealing and the imprint that it makes. Χαρακτήρ also refers to that imprint, and that synonymy is the key to understanding the Thomist ‘seal of the Spirit’. Aquinas teaches that the term ‘character’ refers both to the sign that can be perceived by the senses and to the spiritual

¹⁷⁶ ST III q. 72, 2 (Source: Aquinas, St. Thomas *Summa Theologiae*, Blackfriars in conjunction with London: Eyre and Spottiswoode 1975 vols. LVII, LVIII, LIX).

¹⁷⁷ ST III q. 72, 2.

¹⁷⁸ ST III q. 72, 2 quotes Ps.44:8.

¹⁷⁹ ST III q. 63, 1.

¹⁸⁰ ST III q. 63, 3 NB Aquinas also quotes texts to do with sealing identified in this thesis: Ezekiel 9:4 and Revelation 7:3 in this explanation of character. He quotes Ephesians 4:30 to suggest that character is attributed to the Holy Spirit and explained through ‘sealing’ (ST III q. 63, 1).

¹⁸¹ St. Thomas Aquinas started writing the *Summa Theologiae* in 1265, it is a summary of his life’s teaching and his previous work includes his commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*. The Second Council of Lyons was in 1274 after Aquinas’s death.

reality that it signifies. This is for Aquinas a way of explaining a much more complex concept which spans from early scriptural use of 'sealing' to a deeper meaning of the relation between humanity and divinity, prefigured at baptism, ratified in confirmation and culminating in the celebration of the Eucharist. Jordan draws attention to Aquinas's use of 'character' to emphasize 'an impressed resemblance between created and uncreated Trinity', which is sharing in the priesthood of Christ.¹⁸²

Aquinas refers the 'seal' of Ezekiel 9:4 and Revelation 7:3 to 'the seal of grace' by which he means election or predestination, and so he rather disengages the promise of protection to eternal life from *sacramental* character by which he sees Christians as marked so as to depute them to the worship of God.¹⁸³ Receiving the 'character' of confirmation is to be conformed to Christ and to share the responsibility of sharing in his mission. It is a 'seal' of belonging, but it also has the function of empowerment:

*Et ideo character non est sicut in subjecto in essentia animae, sed in ejus potentia.*¹⁸⁴

If it is not in 'essence of the soul as its subject but rather in its power' then the function of 'character' is something dynamic which can motivate the cognitive aspect of the soul to active works. Jordan's interpretation of Aquinas's 'character' as a 'conferred role'¹⁸⁵ suggests an understanding that 'character' has the sacramental effects that Aquinas describes as *ex opere operato*.¹⁸⁶ Schillebeeckx explains that Aquinas uses *ex opere operato* to describe sacramental efficacy as works of Christ. The grace received through the sacrament depends on the recipient's receptiveness and the faith and charity of the minister is less important than the work of Christ. 'Character' is there as a resource to draw on as a sacramental outcome of baptism in Christ. This helps to explain Augustine's defence of baptism being unrepeatable and is catechetically important for confirmation as

¹⁸² Jordan, M.D., 'Sacramental Characters' *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19.3, London and USA: Sage Publications 323-338 (2006), p.326.

¹⁸³ ST III q.63, 3.

¹⁸⁴ ST III q.63,4.

¹⁸⁵ Jordan 'Sacramental Characters', p.327.

¹⁸⁶ The grace of the sacrament is bestowed by the power of God.

the individual does not necessarily experience the grace or sacramental effect (*res sacramenti*) immediately.

This Christological foundation of the *ex opera operato* efficacy is brought out still more clearly when St. Thomas connects this efficacy with sacramental character.¹⁸⁷

Not only is this explained by sacramental ‘character’, but it helps to explain the spiritual ‘power’ unleashed within those marked by the ‘character’ or ‘seal of the Spirit’.

Aquinas uses the example of the change in the apostles at Pentecost to illustrate this ‘power’. The suggestion is evident that confirmation effects spiritual maturity and brings strength to add to the imprint of baptism. Furthermore, ‘character’ is indelible, the sign that the soul has been ontologically changed. Unlike grace which can be lost, ‘character’ conferred at baptism, confirmation and holy orders, remains in the soul forever. Aquinas teaches that each sacrament has a unique effect, which for confirmation is that of strengthening. Instituted by Christ through his promise to send the Paraclete,¹⁸⁸ confirmation imparts a ‘character’ which contributes ‘to the perfecting of salvation’.¹⁸⁹ It enables those who receive the ‘character’ to share in the priesthood of Christ as mature members of the Christian faith. Thus Aquinas clarifies what the ‘character’ of confirmation provides that baptism does not. He uses the metaphor of the house (below) and the example of the apostles giving the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands to explain that confirmation is reserved for bishops, who represent the apostles through the apostolic succession.

But the sacrament of confirmation is the final perfecting of the sacrament of baptism in such a way that by baptism a man is built up as a spiritual house and written like a spiritual letter. But through the sacrament of confirmation, the house that was built is dedicated as a temple of the Holy Spirit; the letter that was written is signed with the sign of the cross.¹⁹⁰

Aquinas explains that human reason is strengthened by gifts of the Holy Spirit, although he does not make an explicit connection between the seven gifts and confirmation. These gifts

¹⁸⁷ Schillebeeckx, E., O.P., *Christ and the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* New York: Sheed and Ward 1963 p.85.

¹⁸⁸ John 16:7 quoted in ST III q.72,1.

¹⁸⁹ ST III q.72,1.

¹⁹⁰ ST III q.72, 11.

are of a higher order than many of the virtues¹⁹¹ because they confer spiritual strength, which is readiness to obey the Holy Spirit.

So reason cannot move us to the ultimate supernatural goal to which the deiform virtues imperfectly dispose us, unless the Holy Spirit also moves and prompts us. To reach that goal we need gifts of the Holy Spirit, in the same way that moral virtues relate our appetitive powers to reason.¹⁹²

‘Character’ creates the catechetical link between the eighth century liturgies that include the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in post-baptismal ‘sealing’,¹⁹³ and the sacrament of confirmation. The ‘seal’ of the Holy Spirit which confers seven gifts for spiritual strengthening is clearly attached to confirmation. These gifts require the spiritual maturity associated with confirmation to become fully effective which explains why they are not attached to baptism. According to Aquinas the seven gifts are inseparable from charity and present in proportion to it, but not automatically preserved, because the recipient can fall back into sin. Jordan argues that Aquinas’s understanding of ‘character’ comes from reading Latin bibles which translate σφραγίς as *signaculum*, giving ‘character’ the context not of ‘sealing’ but of signification.¹⁹⁴ We can question Jordan’s argument with particular reference to the evolution of ‘seal of the Spirit’ uncovered in this chapter. That Aquinas’s ‘character’ falls predominantly within the economy of ‘sealing’ can be proved by the theological development of ‘seal of the Spirit’ from the New Testament through Patristic rites of baptism to Augustine’s teaching on the meaning of ‘sacrament’ and through the subsequent liturgical development of confirmation as a separate sacrament. All of these can be identified to underpin the synonymy between ‘seal’ and ‘character’ in the *Summa Theologiae*.

Through his theology of ‘character’ Aquinas represents the bringing together of the different aspects of the evolutionary journey of the ‘seal of the Spirit’. Upholding the

¹⁹¹ Aquinas places charity above the other virtues because he teaches that without charity there could be no other virtues, grace or spiritual gifts.

¹⁹² ST II q.68, 2.

¹⁹³ The *Gelasian Sacramentary* and the *Byzantine Rite*.

¹⁹⁴ Jordan ‘Sacramental Characters’.

relationship between baptism and confirmation: ‘sealing’ is the gift of the Holy Spirit in the waters of baptism as a symbol of belonging to the Christian fellowship; ‘sealing’ is anointing with Chrism for the gift of the Spirit; ‘sealing’ is post-baptismal anointing which confers the seven gifts of the Spirit and ‘sealing’ is the perfecting of baptism. The baptismal ‘seal’ of the Fathers, represented by Augustine has developed Old Testament types and New Testament antitypes into liturgy and tradition and has been sustained in Aquinas’ teaching that the ‘seal’ of confirmation is an indelible spiritual mark. A significant landmark in the evolution of ‘seal of the Spirit’ lies in the teaching of Aquinas and sees ‘sealing’ equated with *χαρακτηρ*. Thus the indelible spiritual mark of anointing becomes associated with a permanent ontological change and confirmation is expressed as the ‘final perfecting’¹⁹⁵ of baptism. The ‘seal of the Spirit’, conferred through the imposition of hands and anointing at confirmation, includes seven gifts for spiritual empowerment.

The ‘seal’ or ‘character’ comprises a concept which explains the unity of the outward sign with the interior grace it confers. It is within this defining phase of the ‘seal’ that conformity to Christ and the four catechetical themes of sealing can all be explained with relation both to the rite of confirmation and its effects.¹⁹⁶ Belonging is clearly depicted through the synonymy of ‘character’ with a mark of belonging to God, authentication through the empowerment to Christian worship conferred through the ‘character’. Authentication is depicted through the *ex opere operato* effects of receiving the sacramental ‘character’ or ‘seal’. A down-payment of salvation is depicted through the eschatological effects of sealing and the establishment of confirmation as a sacrament in its own right. The theme of post-confirmation mission is clearly explained both through the effects of receiving the ‘character’ and within Aquinas’s teaching on the role of confirmation as the sacrament of Christian maturity. In this respect, not only does

¹⁹⁵ ST III q.72.II.

¹⁹⁶ In particular the ‘Effects of Confirmation’ CCC 1302 -1305.

Aquinas's teaching on 'character' forge links with preceding liturgies from early Christian era, but also stands the test of time. The metaphor of receiving the 'character' as a mark of a soldier of Christ has been identified as being the standard catechetical tool for confirmation during the early to mid twentieth century.¹⁹⁷ Whilst this imagery no longer appeals to modern catechetical pedagogy, Aquinas's teaching on the sacramental 'character' is arguably the key to unlocking what it means to be 'sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' in modern confirmation.

Conclusion to Chapter 5

The development of rites and imagery to do with 'sealing' in Christian initiation demonstrates that Ephesians 1:13-14 'you...were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance' was central to the meaning of '*Accipe signaculum Doni Spiritus Sancti*' by the time confirmation was documented as a separate sacrament. The shades of meaning attributed to 'sealing' in the New Testament are identified in the liturgical concepts of 'sealing' for the completion of what has happened in baptism, for marking the entry into the Christian community and as a symbol of an indelible mark of being transformed by receiving the gift of the Spirit. Together with the teaching contained in Ephesians 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; John 6:27 and Revelation 7:2 and 14:1, Ephesians 1:13-14 describes the 'seal' as an image of the gift of the Holy Spirit which is conferred at baptism. It remains incontrovertible that the 'seal' is equated with baptism, as Lampe has held. This chapter has traced the development of the concept of the 'seal of the Spirit' in early Christian liturgy and found it to be integrally bound to the whole process of Christian initiation through the bestowal of the gift of the Spirit through baptismal immersion, anointing with Chrism and, sometimes, the laying on of hands. Pauline baptismal teaching contained in the phrase 'you...were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance' applied also to confirmation by the

¹⁹⁷ Chapter 2.

thirteenth century, as shown in Aquinas' teaching on sacramental 'character'. The 'seal of the Spirit' as an image for the gift of the Spirit at confirmation describes a perfecting of the gift already given at baptism and includes seven gifts to strengthen the recipient for Christian living. The baptismal σφραγίς has become the confirmation 'seal of the Spirit' in a way that explains, rather than supersedes New Testament teaching on 'sealing' and so a firm foundation has been set for the liturgical and catechetical experience of today's church. In modern liturgy, this is represented in the prayer for the Consecration of the Chrism¹⁹⁸ as confirmation perfecting baptism and the new 'Rite of Confirmation'.¹⁹⁹ Catechetically formalised in the Catechism of the Catholic Church,²⁰⁰ much of the evolution of Christian teaching on what it means to 'be sealed' is rooted in the teaching of the Fathers from the first to fifth centuries, baptismal tradition and Aquinas's teaching on the sacramental 'character'. The pedagogy underlying the four catechetical themes of sealing is not only identifiable with the evolutionary journey of 'sealing' from the New Testament to the new 'Rite of Confirmation', but defined by it. By entering into the history of the rites of sealing, it is possible to comprehend more fully the present meaning of the 'be sealed' in confirmation.

¹⁹⁸ 'Rite for Consecration of the Chrism'.

¹⁹⁹ 'Rite of Confirmation' 1976 p.301.

²⁰⁰ CCC key texts: 1121; 1274; 1293-1296; 1300 -1310.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND APPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS TO CATECHESIS

The argument

The argument has been proposed that the bishop's words 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' contain a doctrine that is a largely 'untapped' catechetical resource from which candidates for confirmation would benefit if it formed part of the catechesis they receive in preparation for this sacrament. The needs pointed to by discussion of contemporary challenges to catechesis validated the decision to undertake a theological analysis of 'the seal of the Holy Spirit' with a view to enriching confirmation catechetical provision. The analysis has highlighted the valuable catechetical content that lies within a network of meanings of 'seal' which has its roots deep in Old Testament scripture and ancient tradition, is centred on a small selection of New Testament texts and grew into the theology and liturgical expression of the 'seal of the Spirit'.

Conclusions in the light of the aims of the research

This chapter addresses the fourth and final aim discussed in Chapter 1, but it will be convenient to review first how the three previous aims have been met.

The first aim was to explore the contemporary challenges to confirmation catechesis. Three main areas of challenge were identified: secularization of society, which includes unevangelized young people; weak content in catechesis, and poorly formed catechists. Some key sources from the contemporary Magisterium, well documented deficiencies in Catholic formation and recent research provided evidence to show that although the Church knows and understands what constitutes barriers to formation there is a significant challenge to all

willing, baptised people to address them. The need for catechetical renewal with resources that are fully in line with Church teaching was discussed and the purpose of further research into the meaning of the 'seal of the Spirit' in confirmation catechesis was justified.

Areas of dissonance have been identified between what young people are receiving¹ and what the Church conveys in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*² and the Rite of Confirmation. The Church wants its confirmands to understand that they receive a 'special outpouring of the Holy Spirit'³ and that besides grace confirmation confers a sacramental character or 'seal' which remains in the soul as a resource to draw on. The words '*Accipe signaculum Domini Spiritus Sancti*' are grounded in Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, and echo St. Ambrose: 'God the Father has marked you with his sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed his pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts'.⁴

However, the evidence from published surveys suggested that young people are poorly formed, often with little idea of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Quinn's concern that confirmation 'has been misused'⁵ in current times due to its separation from baptism, and De Clerk's⁶ view that we need to differentiate between confirmation and a statement of faith are both upheld by more generic statistical evidence about young people's religious identity.⁷ Carotta's⁸ comment that confirmation has 'quietly become very functional' and 'informative',

¹ United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1997. <http://old.usccb.org/catechism/document/oralrpt.shtml> and GDC 30.

² CCC 1121, 1295, 1296, 1300-1305 in particular.

³ CCC 1303.

⁴ St. Ambrose, *De Mysteriis* 7, 42, quoted in CCC 1303.

⁵ Quinn, Frank, C. 'Confirmation, does it make sense?' *Ecclesia Orans* V (1988) p.339.

⁶ De Clerk, Paul, 'Towards a Consensus on Confirmation?' *Studia Liturgica* 26 (1996) p.199.

⁷ Singleton, A. 'The Impact of World Youth Day on Religious Practice', *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2011) 57-68; Duyvenbode, Matthew van, *Mapping the Terrain: Discovering the reality of young Catholics*, Catholic Youth Ministry Federation, summary report 2009; Francis, L.J. and Pocock, N. 'Assessing Religious Maturity: The development of a Short Form of the Religious Status Inventory (RSInv-S10)' *Journal of Empirical Theology* 20.2, (2007) 179 – 199.

⁸ Carotta, Mike 'Unchaining Confirmation' NCCL White Paper, <http://data.memberclicks.com/site/nccl/Mke%20Carotta.pdf> (2010) p.1. He of course is addressing the American situation.

and needs to become also 'inspirational and transformative' rather supports the suggestion that young people and catechists are baffled about confirmation.

That poorly formed catechists, unevangelized young people and weak resources have been identified as key issues of current catechetical concern helps to explain why the Church's message appears not to be fully transmitted to its people. Lack of understanding about the 'seal of the Spirit' on the part of catechists is likely to have a significant effect on the theological understanding of young people. This underpins the view that the provision of adequate resources should include catechist training. There is clearly a need for a catechetical resource that would enable young people to embrace the transforming gift of the Holy Spirit in their lives in a spirit of love of Christ through prayer and active faith with theological understanding of what happens when they are 'sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'. It requires a catechetical pedagogy that supports young people pastorally, spiritually and theologically.

With the conclusion that young people are very often receiving confirmation catechesis before they are fully evangelized, and that resources are inadequate to address the issue, it is understandable why abandonment of the faith is common:

Very often at this time the pre-adolescent, in receiving the sacrament of confirmation, formally concludes the process of Christian initiation but from that moment virtually abandons completely the practice of the faith. This is a matter of serious concern which requires specific pastoral care based on formative resources of the journey of initiation itself.⁹

A survey of published materials addressed the second aim: to establish how far the catechetical content of confirmation preparation programmes provides for candidates to understand what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

⁹ GDC 181.

An examination of confirmation catechetical materials published before the Second Vatican Council showed that the Church failed to convey much about 'sealing' before the current Rite of Confirmation. It is likely that catechists may not understand the meaning of the 'seal of the Spirit' because their own catechists would not have told them about it.

A survey of seven published confirmation preparation programmes in popular use revealed a recurring imbalance of content and an uneasy relationship between catechesis and Church teaching. All the programmes presented the theme of post-confirmation mission most thoroughly, but with little or no allusion to a down-payment on salvation. The pedagogy of modern published programmes was found to be based predominantly on the authors' perception of young people's secular experience as a means of introducing participation in the Christian community. The programmes mostly encouraged young people to think about Jesus in terms of human friendship and enter into a relationship with him, while focusing little on prayer. There was a significant focus on 'personalizing confirmation'¹⁰ so that the candidates can access it on their own terms, and little, if any, allusion to being indelibly marked with the gift of the Holy Spirit. These results help us to see how young people may understand confirmation as a rite of passage into adult faith and the right to choose whether or not to follow Jesus. Despite the Church's decision to make it clearer that confirmation is a sacrament of initiation,¹¹ the modern catechetical programmes surveyed point to a continued emphasis on affirmation rather than confirmation.

The finding that on the whole confirmation preparation programmes provide little or nothing to help candidates understand what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' was

¹⁰ Koplik, W.J and Brady, J.E. *We Celebrate Confirmation: Catechist's Guide*, USA: Silver Burdett and Ginn 1990 p. T18.

¹¹ 'Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation' *The Rites of the Catholic Church as revised by the Decree of the Second Vatican Council* New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1976 p.290 – 291.

consistent with the concerns of coordinators and catechists about a lack of adequate resources, and with gaps in the theological language and understanding of some of them.

The third aim: to investigate the scriptural and traditional meanings alluded to, and the catechetical usefulness of the bishop's words in the liturgy of confirmation 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit,' was met by exploring a network of meanings which evolved through scriptural and secular use and had a profound impact on the Pauline theology and Johannine imagery of 'sealing'. Anointing of priests, prophets and kings in the Old Testament was found to exemplify 'sealing' as setting apart for a particular purpose, which prefigured Jesus receiving his Father's 'seal' in John 6:27. The baptism of Christ provides the typology for Christians being 'sealed' into Christ as priest, prophet and king. Though later Christian teaching that baptism and confirmation are transforming sacraments in which the individual is indelibly marked with the gift of the Holy Spirit was probably not in the mind of the Evangelist, John 3:33 and particularly 6:27 use the term σφραγίζω in a way which prepares for later Christian teaching which identifies the initiate as belonging to Christ at the moment of baptism, being conformed to him and being authenticated for his service. Building on the background provided in the books of Ezekiel and Daniel, Revelation 7:2 and 14:1 provide the basis for Christian teaching that the sacramental 'seal' is also eschatological.

It is Paul's teaching on 'sealing'¹² that combines a Jewish heritage with the beginnings of a universal Christian sacramental theology. Paul's teaching applies 'sealing' to Christian initiation and sets the tone, conceptually and linguistically, for understanding what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' in confirmation. Paul brings together the concepts of σφραγίζω and ἀρραβών in Ephesians 1:13-14. The gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred on

¹² Particularly Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, but also Rom. 4:11.

Christian initiates, where it remains so to speak an indelible mark, pointing sacramentally to the eschatological Kingdom and so promising salvation.

The network of meanings attached to 'sealing' in the New Testament relates to the four catechetical themes and attests to the catechetical usefulness of the 'seal of the Spirit' for confirmation preparation. In particular, the connection between 'sealing', belonging to God, and a mark of protection, contributes to an understanding of 'sealing' as being marked for the Day of Redemption.

These powerful New Testament texts provide a rich resource for a tri-dimensional confirmation catechesis that looks back to Christ's baptism as well as to Pentecost, that informs candidates about the present moment of welcoming God's gift of the Holy Spirit, through Christ, into their lives at confirmation, so perfecting what happened at their own baptism, and that looks ahead, not only enabling candidates to grow spiritually in the fullness of that gift, but also signposting the Day of Redemption.

An investigation of baptismal liturgies from the first to the fifth centuries sought to bridge the gap between New Testament teaching and modern liturgical rites by tracking the evolution of the liturgical 'seal of the Spirit'. It revealed that far from following a linear path, rites to do with 'sealing' vary considerably in various Eastern and Western traditions. Possibly the tradition of anointing originated in West Syria. The early Palestinian, Syrian, Egyptian and Latin African sources, and the later Roman and Milanese rites, permitted a glimpse of the rich catechetical potential in the series of rites that comprised or surrounded baptism and was immediately followed by the Eucharist to complete Christian initiation. A lack of cohesiveness concerning the moment the Holy Spirit was conferred during the baptismal rites suggested the need to consider them in a holistic way. These liturgies must be investigated cautiously in the context in which they were written, avoiding the error of looking back from our modern

practice of confirmation and identifying it too readily with one or more rites which were in use before confirmation emerged as a separate sacrament. Recent scholarly debate about the dates and authorship of the *Apostolic Tradition* and *Mystagogical Catecheses* may remind us that both represented 'living liturgies' of their time, in which important rites of post-baptismal anointing with Chrism emerged.

The *Mystagogical Catecheses* and the writings of Ambrose comprise a valuable resource which enables neophytes to engage fully with the experience of taking on the image of Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism. This is the essence of 'sealing'. It is perhaps best to read the rich tradition as referring in one sense to the whole of what happens at baptism and comes to be 'dramatised' by pre- and/or post-baptismal anointings and post-chrismational hand-laying by the bishop. The teaching develops within the typology of the baptism of Christ and of dying and rising with Christ through baptismal immersion. It ratifies the neophyte as belonging to Christ. In another sense, the developing tradition refers the gift of the Holy Spirit to one or other of the emerging additional rites and allows themes of being sealed with the Spirit to be attached to what emerges as chrismation/confirmation. In both senses, the tradition makes detailed reference to scripture. It can be concluded that the Pauline image of 'seal' was originally associated with baptism, and that as the baptismal rite evolved over time the 'seal of the Spirit' came to be attached to confirmation in a way that 'expands', rather than supersedes or negates the teaching of Ephesians 1:13-14.

The related concept of 'character' came to be applied to baptism, confirmation and holy orders to explain the Church's decision that these sacraments could not be repeated, even if baptism had taken place outside the Catholic Church. This was aided by Augustine's teaching that as well as an outward rite there was an internal reality with a permanent effect. He called this reality 'sacrament'. Although Aquinas speaks in ST III 72, 2 about the Chrism of confirmation

symbolising the Holy Spirit, when he deals with the concept of ‘character’ he associates the Spirit more closely with ‘the seal of grace’ that ‘deputes’ the elect to enjoy eternal glory,¹³ and distinguishes this from the sacramental character which conforms the baptized, confirmed and ordained to Christ as priest and empowers them for his service. Hence the person who is ‘sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’ at confirmation becomes conformed to Christ and enters sacramentally into belonging, authentication, and a post-confirmation mission. These catechetical themes are underpinned by Aquinas’s clarification of what the ‘character’ of confirmation provides that baptism does not: those who receive the ‘character’ share in the priesthood of Christ as mature members of the Christian community, charged ‘*quasi ex officio*’ to bear witness to the faith.¹⁴ In III 63, 5 Aquinas maintains that character is eternally indelible, but he does not seem to make much of sacramental character as a down-payment on salvation and an eschatological imprint on the soul, probably because he is acutely aware of the possibility of dying in mortal sin and associates the certainty of salvation with predestination rather than with the reception of the sacraments. Arguably Aquinas represents an attenuation of the sense of the sacraments as grounds for hope, so that a recovery of this sense relies on reaching back to before the Middle Ages. However, the prayer for the consecration of the Chrism¹⁵ always preserved the truth that anointing with it both perfects baptism and promises heavenly glory. And by seeing ‘character’ as *res et sacramentum* Aquinas helps us see it as a permanent resource for the *res sacramenti*, i.e. grace in the sense of a freely given share in the divine life centred on charity, and so as grounds for hope.

¹³ ST III, 63, cf. the ‘seal of predestination’ in ST III 63, 1 ad 1.

¹⁴ ST III q. 72, 1, 2, 5.

¹⁵ ‘Rite for Consecration of the Chrism’ *The Rites of the Catholic Church as revised by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council* New York: Pueblo Publishing Company 1976 p.515.

Aquinas maintained that the seven gifts are present in proportion to charity.¹⁶ He does not explore their connection with confirmation. However, we can develop his theology by presenting the gift of the Spirit at confirmation as providing, as sacramental grace,¹⁷ the resource as well as the duty to share in Christ's ministry under the guidance of the Spirit who, through the seven gifts, led him.

A Theology of the Seal

The Second Vatican Council decided to clarify the meaning of confirmation as part of the sacramental process of initiation, closely bound to baptism and the Eucharist and typically taking place between them. Although this traditional order of sacraments seldom takes place in the Western Church, the Church's decision to re-associate the sacraments of initiation in the hearts and minds of the people does validate a confirmation catechesis that reaches back to before confirmation was recognised as a separate sacrament so as to unlock the meaning of 'the seal of the Spirit' once more.

Since confirmation evolved as part of a single process of initiation, it needs to be defined theologically and taught catechetically in the context of baptismal initiation and the Eucharistic completion of initiation, without detriment to its distinctiveness. The concepts of 'seal' and 'character' provide us with a catechetical tool to explain the similarity between baptism and confirmation as unrepeatable sacraments. As the Spirit is given in all the sacraments, we do not need to hold that the gift of the Spirit at confirmation 'replaces' the gift of the Spirit that Paul sees as taking place at baptism. The liturgy of confirmation has always made clear that it is those who have already been 'reborn of water and the Holy Spirit' who receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to strengthen or complete what has taken place at baptism.

¹⁶ ST I-II q. 68, 5.

¹⁷ ST III q. 62, 2.

The language of baptism and confirmation is properly similar, though it is also essential to consider what is given at baptism and what takes place during confirmation in order to show how it is both 'transitional' between baptism and the Eucharist and confers something that baptism does not. The consecration of the Chrism expresses conformity to Christ as priest, prophet and king, and this can be explained as central to confirmation even though it is also expressed in the current liturgy for infant baptism. Moreover, Aquinas emphasized that all sacramental character is a sharing in Christ's priesthood. It becomes increasingly apparent that confirmation catechesis should not and cannot be taken out of the context of the whole process of initiation, and needs to be explained with analogies such as belonging, and with reference to a range of images and elements found in the history of confirmation, not just anointing but also, for example, commissioning through manumission. The theology of the 'seal' shows that in confirmation candidates are both deputed to share in the mission of Christ and consecrated by the Holy Spirit. Dramatized by the gestures of anointing and hand-laying, the words 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' provide a catechetical resource which helps to make sense of confirmation through the four themes of belonging, authentication, a down-payment on salvation and post-confirmation mission.

Belonging can be illustrated through the Old Testament and secular background of marking property, and Paul's teaching that God the Father claims the baptized as his own, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. The initiative belongs with God, both in baptism and as candidates are irrevocably claimed in confirmation. The sense of being claimed by God at confirmation can be catechetically challenging and at odds with the popular view that the initiative is with the candidate to choose whether or not to continue in the faith. Reference to Song of Songs 2:16 and 8:6, and the imagery of the divine bridegroom – those whom God has loved and marked he will protect and bring securely to himself – can help some candidates understand that they

are called by God and led by the Spirit in the catechetical journey. Others may prefer the image of friendship as a gift to help explain confirmation as God's renewal of his commitment to his children. The connection between σφραγίς and ἀπαβών is relevant when presenting confirmation as a pledge of God's loyalty.

This leads on to the image of the 'seal' in Revelation, which distinguished those marked for protection. Rites for the consecration of the Chrism apply the theme of sealing for protection and preservation to confirmation, through the idea that those marked by God are marked forever. Thus we see the sacramental seal as a down-payment on salvation.

Likewise the concept of χαρακτήρ describes sealing by God as an imprint. Χαρακτήρ came to be understood as a sacramental effect or reality (*res et sacramentum*) which is a permanent resource that remains available even when it is not recognised or employed. To understand χαρακτήρ as *res et sacramentum* helps to explain to candidates that they are permanently changed at confirmation although they may not feel any different, and any time they are ready to be fully empowered by the gift of the Spirit they have received they can call upon it. It also shows that baptized and confirmed Christians are signs and means of God's grace, to others as well as themselves, and this is where the initiative lies with them to employ this precious gift.

Thus we have the 'seal' imparting a 'sacramentality' which conforms the recipient to Christ as 'the sacrament of God' as well as priest, prophet and king. It authenticates us as being of Christ, and commissions us to his service. The use of 'seal' in John 6:27, which may refer to Jesus's baptism and the beginning of his ministry, suggests that baptism and confirmation mark the initiates' sharing in Christ's relationship with the Father and his mission. Here we have the theme of mission in conformity to Christ, which can be supported through envisaging confirmation as a *missa* rite which sends the newly confirmed out to participate in bringing about the kingdom of God.

The network of theological meaning associated with sealing enables candidates for confirmation to understand that they are sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit as a sacramental moment of being claimed in God's love to share in his promise and to receive a dignity and power in Christ to carry out his work.

Thus, a strong theology of the seal stands to address some of the inconsistencies and uncertainties associated with confirmation catechesis. It enables us to lead candidates more confidently into confirmation as the beginning of a new stage of their journey in Christ and provides them with a way to understand confirmation as a deepening of their personal relationship with God both now and in their hope of future glory.

Recommendations

The final aim of the research is to apply the findings to confirmation catechesis that will enable newly confirmed young people to apply a clear understanding what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' to their post-confirmation sense of Catholic identity. Although it is outside the remit of this research to present learning and teaching materials for confirmation it would be incomplete to end without suggesting how this elusive network of ideas can be tapped into for the benefit of candidates for confirmation and their catechists. A study of a large sample of statistical information generated from Likhert scale questionnaires and a large representative sample of interviews of coordinators, catechists and recently confirmed young people would be highly desirable prior to establishing a working party to construct action plans and bids for funding that would be necessary to address fully the applications below.

In applying the findings to confirmation catechesis it is essential to maintain that 'confirmation' is both a separate sacrament and part of a process of initiation that comprises baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist, and to see 'confirmation catechesis' as part of a

process of evangelization. It would contradict the Second Vatican Council's revision of confirmation and negate the conclusions of this research to remove 'confirmation catechesis' from this context. Evidence from published surveys in Chapter 1 suggests that young people are presenting themselves for confirmation catechesis, unevangelized. They have probably received the Eucharist for the first, and possibly only, time at the age of 8 or 9. Drawing on comments from coordinators, Fossion's¹⁸ recommendations, and acknowledging the Patristic process of catechumenate and mystagogy, it is likely that the unity of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist would be more clearly understood if the traditional order of the three sacraments of initiation were to be restored.

Three key recommendations are discussed below:

- A positive climate of youth ministry to enable a process of evangelization
- A bank of catechetical resources to be drawn on for sacramental preparation
- Training for catechists and peer mentors

Youth Ministry

Addressing the needs of unevangelized young people is a key problem for confirmation catechists, many of whom are poorly formed themselves. Fossion proposes that five periods make up the first thirty years of life, each inviting its own form of evangelization. This recommendation concerns ministry to young people in Fossion's periods of childhood maturity (around 9-11 years), first adolescence (around 12-14) and the maturity of adolescence (around 16 to 18). Fossion does not prescribe a structured confirmation preparation process, whereas I consider that addressing the problem of unevangelized young people through youth ministry will create a context for a sacramental preparation programme.

¹⁸ Fossion, A. 'Les trente premières années: nouveaux rythmes en catéchèse' *Revue Lumen Vitae* vol LXIII no. 1 (2008) p.19-33.

Research¹⁹ has indicated that a positive approach to youth ministry works. Central to the success of World Youth Day is a climate where young people feel confident worshipping together and engaging in dialogue. An environment of positive youth ministry which provides for a wide age range is the first step to creating a context where evangelization can begin to happen. Even before any programme of confirmation catechesis starts, it is essential to have confident adults prepared to take the role of guides and enablers. Discussions about faith, prayer, worship, mass attendance and community service are all highly desirable outcomes while an active youth ministry begins to take place. Small steps and lots of encouragement are essential, plus the support of coordinators and of other groups where youth ministry is up and running. Small rural parishes could be helped by a shared approach to youth ministry. Such expansion of the 'youth ministry community' allows more structured activities to be built up and creates a climate where evangelization can take place. It is my belief that if youth ministry is 'owned' by young people, and a climate of mutual respect between adult enablers and young people is created, prayer will follow, then a more natural flow into sacramental preparation. My recommendation is that young people, guided by their priests and catechists, should enrol for confirmation preparation when they feel ready to do so. CCC1308 reminds us that 'we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that baptismal grace is a grace of free and unmerited election'. This may not entirely solve the problem of unevangelized young people, but it provides for young people to find out about their faith and begin to experience it more fully before considering enrolling on a confirmation preparation programme. Choosing confirmation should be the biggest decision yet in their young lives and it is the responsibility of the Church to enable that decision to be taken wisely, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹ Singleton, 'The Impact of World Youth Day'.

Resources

It is acknowledged that restoring the order of sacraments would no longer allow confirmation preparation to happen in isolation from preparation for the Eucharist and the sacrament of penance. A resource bank for a holistic approach to sacramental preparation is recommended. The suggestions below concern the 'seal of the Spirit' in confirmation as it relates to baptism, on the understanding that Eucharistic preparation will also be a part of the process.

Key recommendations:

- Changing the culture of resources
- A process of confirmation preparation based on phases of discernment, catechesis, celebration and mystagogy
- The four catechetical themes relating to the 'seal of the Spirit'

We have seen from chapters 1 and 2 that the lack of appropriate resources is a barrier to catechesis. Employing the theme of the 'seal of the Spirit' when developing resources will ensure they enable all candidates to understand what it means to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism and be strengthened by it when they are 'sealed' at confirmation, and to develop a better understanding of the Spirit's role in their lives. However, it is essential to change the culture which seems to pervade published programmes, that the process of confirmation preparation can be confined to a one-size-fits-all book of sessions with worksheets included. A process centred on the theme of the 'seal of the Spirit' is recommended that would respond to the call of the *Catechism* by providing a pedagogy that addresses pastoral needs, spiritual development and theological understanding. It should be holistic, encompassing 'the four pillars of the faith',²⁰ especially since it needs to include

²⁰ A 'holistic pedagogy' is one of the 'Twelve Keys' of catechesis in Willey, P, de Cointet, P. and Morgan, B *The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis* San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2008, p. 17, Willey et.al. connect this to the four pillars identified in CCC13.

preparation for the Eucharist following confirmation. Furthermore a resource for confirmation preparation needs to take account of different stages of spiritual formation. An adaptation of the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) is suggested as a model for this process,²¹ with its stages of pre-catechumenate, catechesis, celebration and mystagogy.

The climate of positive Youth Ministry recommended above prepares for the first stage, which must include a period of discernment. This would allow young people to spend time in prayer and guided discussion to develop awareness of the Spirit's work in their lives and, with the help of trained catechists, to make a reasoned choice about whether they are willing and ready to commit to sacramental preparation (see *Table 1* p264).

Confirmation preparation corresponds to the period of catechesis. It would encompass 'learning about' confirmation and 'learning from' what has already happened at baptism. Central to this period, the young people would learn about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and what it means to receive the Holy Spirit as a spiritual seal to conform them to Jesus. They will learn that they have received the Holy Spirit at baptism and are strengthened by him at confirmation. Key resources for catechists to tap into for confirmation catechesis include the homily for the 'Rite of Confirmation', the 'Rite of Confirmation' itself, the Pentecost Story and other biblical material, and CCC 1121, 1274, 1295, 1296, 1300-1305, together with some key questions and answers. A planning framework for understanding the 'seal' of the Holy Spirit in confirmation catechesis is suggested below (*Table 2* p.265).

The period of Celebration (*Table 3* p.266) is centred on receiving the sacrament of confirmation and the period of Mystagogy (*Table 4* p.266) looks back to look ahead.

²¹ Zanzig (Zanzig, T. *Confirmed in a Faithful Community – A Senior High Confirmation Process*, Winona USA: St. Mary's Press, 2001) adapts the stages of RCIA for his process of confirmation preparation and renames them: invitation, formation, reflection and mission.

This framework of ideas is not a whole confirmation preparation programme so much as an application of findings to show how the 'seal of the Spirit' is a useful catechetical resource. The framework would form part of a bank of ideas and activities which are available to the 'trained' catechist to adapt for the age and experience of their group. Sealing for conformity to Christ and the four themes are central. The framework builds on the homily for the 'Rite of Confirmation' and the recommendations of the Apostolic Constitution in the 'Rite of Confirmation', and it aims to enable candidates to draw the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist closer in their understanding and experience of the process of initiation. The bank of ideas would include opportunities for learning about the meaning of 'seal' in its historical and scriptural settings, insofar as these are accessible by young people and applicable to the sacrament of confirmation and to their own lives.

Training for catechists and peer mentors

The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) points to the need for specific training for catechists. The sacramental 'seal of the Spirit' has been shown to be a central theme for appreciating what it means to receive the Spirit at confirmation. It is clearly a theologically complex issue, but also a fruitful one. It is evident that training is required to support the work that coordinators and catechists are doing especially if new, unfamiliar resources are to become available. This would help close the gap between what the Church communicates and what confirmation candidates seem to receive. One catechist suggested that a certificated training programme would raise the subject knowledge and profile of catechists. Training and certification could be provided by coordinators, but it is essential to ensure that everyone is adequately supported. Diocesan coordinators' expertise could be supplemented by further specific training from reliable providers of degrees in applied theology and experienced coordinators who already have a secure level of subject knowledge.

An organised programme of catechist training is suggested, based on scripture, the *Catechism*, the GDC, and the rites of Confirmation and the consecration of Chrism. With increased cohesion of coordinator training, and sharing of good practice, provision for catechists can be coordinated successfully at diocesan and parish levels. In the same way, Youth Ministry specialists could share expertise to enable parishes to create a climate of positive youth ministry to encourage evangelization. In this way catechists will be supported in developing systems of peer mentoring involving recently confirmed young people.

Clearly ordered catechetical content, grounded in scripture and the liturgy, together with renewal of an understanding of what it means to ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’ amongst the adults who hand on the faith to young people is essential before these ideas can be disseminated as part of the process of confirmation preparation.

Table 1 Framework of key ideas for the period of Discernment

Discernment Aim: <i>Participants will be given the opportunity to discern God in their lives and consider whether they are ready to enrol on a confirmation preparation programme.</i>			
	Leaders	Participants	Prayer ideas
Who is God?	Leaders introduce /explain God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with imagery like water, ice and steam (full explanation of image as Trinity)	Participants share what they already know about God through discussion, art and music-making.	Focal point: Water, ice, steam; Quiet reflection; Lord's prayer; Music.
How do we talk about God?	Leaders introduce images of Spirit – dove, fire, wind... Discussion of what they tell us about the Spirit. What about a 'seal'? St. Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit is a 'seal', what does a seal do?	Discussion of Father, Son and Spirit and how different people (leader, participants, priest) talk about God. Participants create posters with images and vocabulary of the Spirit and make own 'seals', imprints in wax.	Focal point: Lighted candle; Quiet reflection and guided meditation (e.g. extract from Jonathan Livingstone Seagull ²²); Quiet prayer; Music.
How do we say 'yes' to God?	Leaders facilitate dramatization of Emmaus story. Share other stories (group activity) such as calls of Samuel, Elijah; Moses and the Burning Bush. Set up system of peer mentors with young people who have been confirmed.	Participation in Emmaus story and discussion. Participate in given 'call' story and feedback to group. How did God call people? How did they recognize him? How do we know when God calls us and respond to him? How do we want to respond to God?	Focal point: Bread and wine; Quiet reflection and guided prayer time; Quiet prayer; Music.

²² BACH, Richard *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull* USA: Scribner Book Company 2006.

Table 2 Framework of key ideas for the 'seal of the Spirit' in the period of Catechesis.

Catechesis Aim: To understand what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'			
	Leaders supported by peer mentors	Participants	Prayer ideas
What is the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit?	In Church - show participants the font, Paschal candle & oil of Chrism. Explain what happened at baptism, symbolism of washing & anointing. Explain transforming gift of the Holy Spirit, freely given on God's initiative. Recap symbols of the Holy Spirit – what do these tell us about the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives from baptism? Relate to the homily for the rite of confirmation.	Bring in baptismal photos and candle if possible. Discuss symbols of baptism and what they mean. Look at the homily for the rite of confirmation and make a note of 'What we would like to find out'. Make 'The Gift the Holy Spirit' banner for Mass.	Reflection on thanksgiving for gifts. Light candle and pray together: Come Holy Spirit ... ²³ Lord's Prayer.
Being conformed to Jesus	Story of baptism of Jesus. Meeting Jesus in the sacraments. How do we recognise Jesus? How do others recognize Jesus in us?	Explore models of Jesus: teacher, helper, friend. How do we communicate with Jesus? What does it say about Jesus in the 'homily'?	Reflection on listening to Jesus. Quiet prayer. 'Footprints'. ²⁴
Belonging	Introduce participants to tattoos and brands as marks of identity e.g. Roman soldiers. How were seals used to mark belonging? Belonging to God? OT activity. What does it mean to belong to God?	Explore how we show allegiance to groups and teams e.g. uniform, badges, fashions, tattoos. Use OT references to explore how 'seals' were used in scriptural times (e.g. Gen. 4:15; 17:10-11).	Visual reflection: Come Holy Spirit ²⁵ Shared prayer for those in need.
Authentication	Show images of ancient 'seals' ²⁶ and discuss sealing for authentication. Recap words at Jesus' baptism. What does Paul teach us? Relate it to the 'homily'.	Discussion of 'seals' to ratify or authenticate and apply to Jesus' baptism. With peer mentors look up 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14 & 4:30. Discuss.	Taizé Chant: <i>Veni Sancte Spiritus</i> ²⁷
A down-payment on salvation	Introduce oil for healing, etc. Look at symbols and meanings for the sacraments. Discuss what sacraments are and how they point to the future.	Look at, smell and touch different essential oils. What is oil for? Match sacraments to their <i>matter</i> and <i>form</i> . Look at anointing in the past and for confirmation.	Church for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

²³ http://catholicism.about.com/od/prayers/qt/Come_HS_Prayer.htm.

²⁴ Stevenson, Mary 'Footprints in the Sand' (1936) <http://www.footprints-in-the-sand.com/index.php?page=Poem/Poem.php>.

²⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQPcrH0y1P0>.

²⁶ The Ashmolean Museum has an extensive collection of Aegean seals and rings with online access <http://www.ashmolean.org/collections/>.

²⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlluWpZpNkQ>.

A mission for the future	Story of Pentecost. Show oil of Chrism and explain purpose. Bring meanings of sealing together, discuss commissioning. The gift of the Holy Spirit transforms us and never leaves us. We may not feel any different at the time, but the Holy Spirit is there to strengthen us and help us to grow in Jesus' love.	Discussion of confirmation as personal Pentecost. Hope and expectations. Discuss why this story is in the 'homily'.	Music, song and praise (participants' instruments) - theme of looking to the future.
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Table 2 (cont.)

Table 3 Framework of key ideas for the 'seal of the Spirit' in the period of Celebration

	Leaders with peer mentors	Participants	Prayer ideas
The 'Rite of Confirmation' - the week before	A run-through with the priest, sponsors, catechists and some recently confirmed young people. Explain what the bishop is doing when he lays his hands on candidates, anoints them and says 'be sealed...'	A run-through in the church with discussions of what everything that happens means. Recap 'homily' questions and discuss what we now know.	Confirmation prayers Reflective music, candle and images of the Holy Spirit – quiet prayer
Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation			

Table 4 Framework of key ideas for the 'seal of the Spirit' in the period of Mystagogy

Mystagogy Aim: to understand how being 'confirmed' has made a difference			
	Leaders and peer mentors	Participants	Prayer ideas
Following confirmation	Discussion - effects of confirmation (CCC 1302-1305). Celebration (candidates and peer mentors).	Opportunity to celebrate that they have been 'sealed'; shared discussion about what it means. Create posters to show the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.	Music and thanksgiving for the gift of the Holy Spirit they have received.
What next?	Guide participants as group and as individuals to reflect on how they have been transformed and meaning for their post-confirmation identity. How can it be applied to their sense of mission; what might they do within the Church; how will they allow their friendship with Jesus grow?	Opportunity to join a programme to become peer mentors for confirmation. Look at talents and different ministries within Church.	Outside for 'Emmaus Walk' prayer and reflection with peer mentors based the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

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APPENDIX 1

Challenges to catechesis: how far do young people understand ‘Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’?

Some questionnaire and interview data has been collected to investigate how far newly confirmed young people understand what it means to ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’. This ‘opportunity sample’ was too small¹ to be representative of general trends but provided indications of how snowball sampling² might be used for further research. The summary below illustrates how some of the challenges to confirmation identified in Chapter 1 are perceived by diocesan coordinators, catechists and candidates at particular church level.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire used Likhert scale strength of agreement and priority questions to elicit what the young people understood about confirmation and in particular how far they understood the meaning of the bishop’s words ‘be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’. The responses suggest that confirmation is seen as a rite of passage and respondents may not understand that receiving the ‘seal of the Spirit’ at confirmation is more than becoming an adult in the Church in a superficial sense.³ In summary, the questionnaires revealed that most candidates understand the Holy Spirit to be an active presence in their lives and responded that confirmation preparation has helped them understand what it means to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. However candidates appear unclear about what the gift of the Holy Spirit is.

¹ 115 questionnaires were returned out of 200, and 14 interviews were undertaken. Seale, C. (ed), *Researching Society and Culture* (3rd ed.) London: Sage 2012, p.130 outlines reasons for determining sample size and using power calculations.

² Also referred to as network sampling – respondents are contacted through personal recommendations within interest groups. Seale, *Researching Society*, p. 145.

³ Inconsistencies shown in these responses cannot be verified as indicating only misunderstanding on behalf of the candidates. It also indicates that, despite a pilot study, the research instrument may either have been inappropriate for qualitative data collection or the questions were poorly worded.

Interviews

Respondents	Role	Diocese	Methodology
C1 – C5	Catechists	A,B and C	Individual interview
Group A (YP1-5)	Young people	A	Focus group interview
YP6	Young person	A and I	Interview
YP7 and YP8	Young people	D	Paired interview
YP9 and YP10	Young person	A and E	Paired interview
DC1 – DC4	Diocesan Confirmation Co-ordinator	A, F, G, H	Individual interview

Table 1 Interview Respondents

(C=Catechist, DC= Diocesan Coordinator; YP=Young Person. These abbreviations are used in the text)

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted face-to face as it was felt that this would be a more appropriate research instrument than questionnaires to pick up on the nuances surrounding questions of belief and personal faith.⁴ Informed consent was obtained from participants and the interviews covered by an ethical protocol.

Four diocesan coordinators were interviewed conducted to gather their perceptions about the confirmation catechesis that is currently practised in their dioceses, and an overview of the key messages that are being transmitted to catechists and candidates.

Five catechists from three different dioceses were interviewed to establish their perceptions of what young people understand about confirmation and the meaning of being ‘sealed’ with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

A focus group of five recently confirmed young people and five university students from two universities in different dioceses were interviewed.

⁴ See Seale, *Researching Society*, p.34-39 for further discussion of qualitative language use.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and a data description for each was written. Statistical data has not been collated because the survey is indicative with too small a sample to be conclusive.

Data discussion

Coordinators cited the age for confirmation, unevangelized young people, under-prepared catechists and lack of suitable published programmes as key challenges to an effective confirmation preparation.

Unevangelized young people

DC4 said that most young people were 'engaged and interested' although many were not evangelized or practising their faith when they started confirmation catechesis. He pointed to the need to offer youth ministry as something different from confirmation catechesis and suggested that the 'weak spot in our sacramental system' is the lack of ongoing 'wrap-around approach of continual catechesis'. C4 described the challenge to catechists of preparing groups of unevangelized young people for confirmation when they are not given the tools of subject knowledge, experience or a good programme. Similarly C5 expressed the view that young people coming to confirmation preparation are generally unevangelized and not ready for catechesis. His main concern about confirmation was the young people's lack of basic knowledge and understanding about Jesus, the catechists' lack of training and the lack of appropriate confirmation preparation material. DC1 described confirmation candidates coming to catechesis without belief in God as a 'huge problem'. She said that if evangelization could happen elsewhere, confirmation catechesis would be more effective, suggesting that catechists are addressing 'too many jobs at once'. DC3 stated that catechists were often 'preoccupied with delivering material' and 'unable to form a relationship with the young people.' This suggests that if all young people were fully evangelized and ready to start catechesis from the same point, delivery would be easier and catechesis more effective. However, it is spiritual development that we have in

mind, not rote learning of facts, and this interpretation of the material, although relevant, would be too simplistic taken alone.

Published Programmes

Most catechists and coordinators were concerned at the lack of appropriate published resources, although for different reasons. While accessible programmes for all catechists, and teenagers' interest were prioritized by some, others were concerned about the lack of theological provision in existing published programmes. Both C1 and C2 produced resources to supplement published programmes: C1 to compensate for the lack of theology and C2 to compensate for the lack of creativity in published programmes. C1 wished 'there was a resource that every catechist could use and you know it's a good resource' expressing concern that not all catechists are 'trained'. DC1 stated that she felt published programmes were 'limited in their scope' and do nothing to support sharing experience of faith. DC4 stated 'I don't know if I've seen a programme that realistically engages them [catechists] with the reality of the teenagers you have in front of you.' DC3 acknowledged that there are 'many programmes' but that the catechists may not have the skills to bring out the best in them, becoming 'a slave to the programme.' C3 stated that published programmes 'focus on a vague appeal to feelings without any substance and they're fearsomely dull therefore because they don't hand on anything'. C5 criticized published confirmation preparation programmes as being too full of weak imagery. Describing the programmes she had looked at as 'lacking' C4 had decided to write her own.

Unpublished programmes

DC1's aim was to create a resource for all parishes that would empower catechists to share their faith on a personal level. She felt that many catechists 'didn't know what they were doing' due to the lack of 'any decent resource'. DC2 had produced a series of catechetical sessions and texts for catechists based on the liturgy for confirmation. DC3 had also produced a resource to enable catechists to work together, to evaluate the programme that

has just been completed, celebrate the success, and address ways forward. C1, C3, C4 and C5 would prefer a resource to enable young people to understand and live their faith through theological understanding, prayer and a developing relationship with Jesus. C3 and C4 had both written their own confirmation preparation programmes to compensate for a lack of understanding of the faith within their groups. C5 also taught from his own resources to ensure a full and accurate theological pedagogy appropriate to the needs of an unevangelized group.

Catechists

Catechists' lack of training was acknowledged to be a barrier to effective confirmation catechesis by all coordinators and most catechists, although exactly what this training should include was regarded differently. DC1 felt that catechists were most worried about teenagers being reluctant to engage in activities. C3 stated that the published programmes cannot compensate for any lack of catechesis or training on behalf of the catechists. DC3 saw catechists as often lacking the skills to deliver a programme: 'I think it's the catechist, the volunteer, that when presented with the material, if they're not equipped to use it well enough, that's the problem'. DC4 stated that his 'preferred model' of confirmation catechesis addresses the needs of unevangelized young people by using a process of evangelization and discernment to progress from pre-catechumenate to catechumenate with confirmation catechesis. C3 identified catechists' lack of knowledge and understanding of their faith as a key difficulty 'some of us for whatever reason are blindingly ignorant.' She felt that it was essential to address key knowledge and understanding of the faith and space for prayer and spiritual growth in confirmation catechesis: 'I think that realistically as a catechist it is your duty to hand on the faith and that is to a very large extent matters of fact. Children should emerge from the confirmation programme with a fuller and richer idea of what their Catholic faith is'.

The young people's responses to the resources

The focus group (YP 1-5) had been confirmed together and were still active in their faith. It was evident from their enthusiasm and comments such as 'lots of fun' and 'great' that they had enjoyed their confirmation preparation. YP 6-10 were all confirmed in different parishes between five and ten years ago. They were all more inclined to see confirmation as something they did as a rite of passage. None of them recalled using a published confirmation preparation programme. There is no evidence that they were unevangelized when they came to confirmation preparation, but they remembered little of the content of their sessions.

'Emotive' and 'theological' pedagogy

Prevalent within the data was an awareness of how some coordinators and catechists prioritised meeting the pastoral and emotional needs of young people and the provision of positive experience which is described by use of the term 'emotive' catechesis (individualization). Others were more concerned with the theological content, described as 'theological' catechesis. The terms 'emotive' and 'theological' are used as peg words to indicate a place for the respondents along the continuum from strongly 'emotive' catechesis, eg DC1 to 'theological' eg DC5.

DC1, 3 and 4 all emphasized the importance of catechists telling the story of their own faith journey as a key part of confirmation catechesis and C3, DC3 and DC4 in particular emphasized the centrality of prayer. Both DC4 and C5 cited one particular programme⁵ as an example of one they would not use whereas DC1 recommends it to catechists. This exemplifies the diversity of approaches within different dioceses. Although the coordinators recognized the same challenges to effective confirmation preparation, this response revealed that DC1 preferred an experiential approach which prioritized enjoyment and was less concerned with theological accuracy than with providing reassurance to

⁵ Klein, D. *Preparing to be Confirmed* Essex: McCrimmons 2002.

catechists which is a strongly 'emotive' pedagogy. DC2 aims at responding to young people where they are 'in their faith and in their questioning' and has prioritized work with catechists whom he feels have a 'thirst' for support. His main resource is the rite of confirmation and there are elements of both 'emotive' and 'theological' pedagogy. DC3 similarly supports an 'emotive' pedagogy through testimony, song and prayer which contains elements of 'theological' approach in that it is grounded in scripture. DC4 encourages catechists to use 'emotive' and 'theological' pedagogy by presenting catechesis as part of the process of evangelization and by challenging the 'prevailing view' that catechists just need to 'plant a few seeds'. His confirmation catechesis is grounded in the Pentecost story and encourages young people in new ways of prayer and developing a relationship with Jesus. The purpose of identifying and labelling the coordinators' catechetical pedagogy provides a context of influences that are filtered through to catechists and to young people, which better enable us to understand why young people do or do not understand the meaning of 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'.

How far do candidates understand the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation?

DC1 said that the gift of the Holy Spirit is something 'you can't really understand with your head'. She perceives that there are 'probably pockets' of understanding in some groups but added 'I think they're probably few and far between. I don't see it in every confirmation programme'. DC2 described receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation as 'continuing outpouring'. His confirmation process starts with the Pentecost story and by confirmation he expects young people to know that they received the Holy Spirit at baptism. DC3 explained that he felt the relationship between confirmation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was essential and 'always there'. He stated that the Holy Spirit 'is the key within the catechesis but how you deliver it is another matter'. He favours catechists telling their own 'story': 'There is that moment when the light comes on as it were...it's trying to understand that gift.' Both DC2 and DC3 see recognition and

understanding of the gift of the Holy Spirit as something that needs to be revealed experientially rather than taught as fact. This view also exemplifies the need for a balance between an emotive and a theological pedagogy. DC4 stated that he felt on average young people understood 'very little' about what it means to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation. He felt that the 'very small minority' who did, were probably 'preformed' through their families or participation in Christian movements, but were often inhibited by peer pressure from discussing matters of faith at their level.

C1 responded that it was 'difficult to say' what candidates understood about receiving the Holy Spirit. C2 stated that their understanding would depend on their experience of catechesis and 'how their thoughts had been nurtured and encouraged'. C3 thought it 'enormously important that young people should understand that they had been confirmed and what that means'. C4 stated that she wants candidates to understand that they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and although they may not feel different at the time, it is infinitely powerful and life-changing.

The view that young people understood little of what it meant to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit was endorsed by the young people's responses. YP1 understood that being confirmed 'gives you a bit of extra strength' and YP3 described the gift of the Holy Spirit as 'your choice' stating 'it's up to you what you do with it'. YP5 remembered learning about the Holy Spirit on the retreat day. YP6 talked about the seven gifts, referring to the fruits of the Spirit as 'a big part of it' which they had had to learn by heart. She explained that she understood receiving the Holy Spirit as 'being guided by God'. YP 7 and YP8 recalled learning about the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit but were unable to elaborate on any of the details. YP9 responded that it was his 'impression' that the gift of the Holy Spirit meant that his faith life was now his choice whereas at baptism and First Communion it had been his parents' choice. YP 10 agreed that it 'becomes your

responsibility'. Neither YP 9 nor YP10 could recall anything about receiving the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

How far do candidates understand the words 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'?

Evidence suggests that young people do not understand 'be sealed' because it is not clearly communicated to them. DC1 stated that she didn't think that young people understood the meaning of 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' adding that she did not think she understood it herself. She stated that she did not consider that young people understood that they were indelibly marked as belonging to God at confirmation because they are not told about it by catechists: 'I don't think we tell them...we don't help them to name it or notice it or describe what it is that's actually happening to them'. She said that the seal is not an essential part of confirmation catechesis: 'They don't understand it but the million dollar question is how to understand it?' This is a highly significant point because it shows the 'emotive' position more as a *laissez-faire* catechesis because of the complexity of the perceived theological position. C1's comments uphold C3's view that there has been a catechetical gap in the Church referring to her own experience as 'nothing was taught or there was this sort of vague stuff about feelings.' Moreover, C3's following comment that 'you cannot hand on your experience of God to someone else' seems to criticize the emotive position. Arguably handing on one's experience of God is exactly what evangelization and catechesis aims to do, through imitation of Christ, and by not doing so, the emotive position could be upheld through increasing the focus on individualization instead of conformity to Christ. C3 goes on to say 'You can tell them about it. You might give them an idea that something like that might happen to them but they need the framework within which that kind of thing can happen'. This would suggest that she is in fact contradicting what the emotive approach does and recommending a theological basis of knowledge and understanding as a context for personal spiritual growth.

DC1's response that young people do not understand being sealed and marked by the Holy Spirit also adds credence to her comment cited earlier that many catechists 'didn't know what they were doing' due to the lack of 'any decent resource' and to the view of DC 2, DC3, DC4 and C1, C3 and C5 that lack of catechist training is a key challenge to effective confirmation catechesis. In DC1's response we have an example of tension between emotive and theological pedagogy, reinforced by her comment about differences between catechists' perceptions of confirmation catechesis and what the Church is trying to communicate: 'I think that's because there's a muddle in the Church, so the Church communicates to catechists a muddle, so they're not quite sure what they're doing'.

Emotive pedagogy is also evidenced in DC1's explanation that the programme she is writing 'will be as much about how to *be* with young people as well as a list of what to teach' and that she wants young people to remember having fun most of all about their confirmation preparation. However, the question about the seal has apparently been interpreted as something probably too complicated and theological to be particularly relevant to confirmation catechesis, despite being the *form* or bishop's words at confirmation. This evidence suggests that young people do not understand what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' because coordinators and catechists do not have the understanding and resources to tell them due to Church teaching not being communicated clearly enough.

Evidence that some candidates are told about the 'seal'

DC2 tells catechists and young people that being sealed is 'cementing them to be members of the body of Christ' and emphasizes initiation. He uses the homily in the confirmation rite with catechists and young people to explore what the bishop means, discussing the seal in terms of authenticity and being given authority. DC3 stated that the bishop's words 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' must be included in the programme. He said that 'there will always be a few and it is just a few who will understand those words'. DC4 felt

that most young people would probably feel that the bishop's words 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' were probably 'a bit of religious mumbo-jumbo, just religious jargon'. This would appear to be in line with DC1's view and suggests that it's not particularly important. It is probable that this comment was made more in the light of the young people's general lack of understanding rather than any confusion of his own as he linked 'be sealed' to work he did with young people to 'build up the concept of Pentecost'. C1 was uncertain how far young people understood the bishop's words but felt that her last group had understood that they were being sealed in order to witness to Christ. She has facilitated this through focusing on the Holy Spirit during the retreat and on discussing the meaning of the rite. C2 felt that it was likely that young people did not understand the bishop's words, and would not be able to articulate it if they did. She did not feel it was a significant problem. Similar to the view of DC1, C2 demonstrates awareness of young people's lack of understanding, but does not perceive it as a problem. C2 also stated that she was unable to remember being told the meaning of 'be sealed' during her own preparation for confirmation: 'If I think back to my confirmation I don't think I really understood what it meant at all'. This illustrates how misconceptions can occur to compensate for lack of catechetical knowledge and how easily a misconception can be passed on. Arguably, tapping into the catechetical meaning of the 'seal of the Spirit' is also a way to address misconceptions which arise in confirmation preparation. C3 felt that she didn't know what young people perceived by being 'sealed' although she expected they were probably told it 'made them adult members of the Church' and 'commissions them for mission'. C4 said she felt it was unlikely they understood being sealed with the Holy Spirit at all because there is a gap between what the Church expresses in the rite and what candidates receive in published confirmation programmes. C5 thought that the young people's lack of understanding was due to starting catechesis while they are unevangelized with catechists who are uncatechized drawing from unsuitable published programmes.

YP1 stated that bishop's words 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' meant 'sort of like being re-baptised but not quite'. She described baptism as being 'sealed with water and everything' and confirmation as almost like that again but a bit more'. None of the focus group was aware of the concept of a spiritual mark nor understood the meaning of Jesus marking them with the seal of his Spirit. YP6 related being sealed to growing spiritually through the process of the sacraments of initiation. She described being spiritually marked as the sign of the cross. Both YP7 and YP8 claimed that they were unable to remember what they understood by being spiritually marked with a seal. When asked what they understood by 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' YP9 responded 'I can't say' and that he had just accepted it as joining the Church. YP10 stated 'it's more like you're an adult in the eyes of the Church'.

How far has confirmation preparation enabled young people to grow in their relationship with Jesus?

Prayer

Catechists and coordinators felt that the relationship between young people and Jesus depends on age, extent of formation, group dynamics and experience of prayer, with the experience of prayer in confirmation preparation as the most significant variable. Interview responses from coordinators and catechists suggest that young people are encouraged to enter into a relationship with Jesus through prayer although not all catechists are comfortable with developing prayer and published programmes can be a hindrance to it. DC1 stated that she feels that young people are encouraged well to think about Jesus but taught 'quite poorly' how to enter into a relationship with him. She was keen that young people have a richer experience of prayer in order to grow closer to Jesus. DC3 emphasised that understanding is developmental. He recommends that young people start with learning to reflect on their day for five minutes and build up their relationship with Jesus through prayer and scripture. DC4 stated that he had been surprised by candidates' commitment to

personal prayer as it is often contrary to the dynamic of the group. C3 stated that young people must be told that Jesus cares for them and taught different ways to pray. She emphasised that a confirmation programme has to include 'a serious opportunity for fairly formal prayer' and if the group dynamic is reluctance to pray aloud, then they should be given space to pray in silence. C5 expressed concerns that young people were not supported in prayer outside the preparation sessions.

Friendship

DC2 described using the imagery of a marriage to teach young people to nurture their relationship with Jesus: 'It's a lifelong commitment which confirmation should be'. DC 3 said that even if the young people do not name Jesus as a friend it is important that catechists 'weave' the 'Jesus bit' into young people's experience and provide a context where they feel more confident to discuss faith matters. DC4 used the term 'Santa Claus model' to describe how young people see Jesus as a friend. As a result of doing personal interviews with candidates before confirmation he had become aware that young people were comfortable with forgiveness but he felt that they would find Jesus' teachings 'a bit extreme'. C1 uses a published programme for post-confirmation sessions to support the newly confirmed young people in developing their relationship with Jesus and in realising that they are called to witness. C4 and C5 alluded to the lack of relationship with Jesus of most young people at the outset of confirmation. C5 said that he had asked some candidates who they thought Jesus was to be given the response 'a man with long hair, a beard and sandals'.

The evidence on prayer and friendship points towards the coordinators and catechists prioritizing young people developing their relationship with Jesus and that this was given higher priority than understanding the meaning of 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'. There was little evidence to demonstrate the interrelatedness of the Holy Spirit, the 'seal of the Spirit' and relationship with Jesus which is likely to be due to coordinators'

and catechists' acceptance that young people do not understand what it means to 'be sealed' and to a large extent don't understand what it means to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Responses from young people suggest that they are more inclined to think of their relationship with Jesus as being on their own terms with confirmation ratifying their rights to choose for themselves how to practise their faith. This is a highly significant point in the light of how far young people understand the meaning of 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' as it emphasizes that they are allowed by many catechists and published programmes to focus on self in relation to God, the humanity of Christ and personal feelings. Such individualization is characteristic of an emotive pedagogy. It encourages an inward focus rather than focus on Christ and is at odds with the understanding of what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit' as belonging to God. YP5 stated that he didn't know how being confirmed had helped him to live as Jesus wanted but YP1 and YP2 were able to say that they were felt stronger by choosing to participate for themselves. YP6 stated that her confirmation had 'definitely helped' her to witness to Jesus. YP8 stated that she is not sure whether she really decided on confirmation for herself or whether her parents decided for her, but nonetheless it had helped her to think about her relationship with Jesus. YP10 responded that she thought confirmation preparation helped her witness to Jesus a little, but the preparation itself was not well done as it was only learning by rote. YP9 stated that he did not think his experience of confirmation preparation affects how he lives today.

Personal Pentecost

The question of personal Pentecost arose in several interviews because coordinators and catechists cited the story of Pentecost as a way to introduce young people to receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation and, without meaning being made explicit, candidates may begin to learn about the effects of confirmation. DC3 described on-going

pastoral formation as essential to young people recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. DC4 outlined the 'concept of disappointment' that is potentially the result of building young people up to think of confirmation as their personal Pentecost and their feeling that nothing has happened which may lead them to question the validity of their religion. He said that confirmation 'confirms people in their lack of faith'. C1 also prepared young people to understand that confirmation will change them but they may not feel it at the time, whereas C4 prepares young people to understand that they may feel the effects of that change at any time and to be prepared. C3 commented that young people should not be told that they will not feel any different at the time of confirmation because they might. The young people generally remembered that they had learnt about Pentecost and YP10 described a celebration of it, but none of them demonstrated awareness of a link between Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation. DC3, DC4, C1, C3 and C4 indicate an understanding of *res et sacramentum* which was not reflected in the candidates' responses.

Conclusion

The data demonstrates concern amongst coordinators and catechists that current practice in confirmation could be improved and that there are significant challenges within the Church of today. The difficulty of catechizing unevangelized young people was recognised by all the coordinators and catechists with different solutions offered. A general trend was upheld particularly by DC3, DC4, C1, C3 and C4 that continued evangelization from first communion to confirmation and continuing after confirmation is a necessary way forward and this evangelization should be provided through youth ministry. All coordinators and catechists prioritized making catechesis a positive experience for candidates. DC1, who favoured a strongly emotive pedagogy, saw a positive experience of catechesis as more important than the learning that takes place. Whereas for coordinators the key issue is pedagogy, for catechists it might be 'knowledge' which is reflected in some catechists'

desire for a resource which can be used for any confirmation preparation group and other catechists' decisions to write their own.

The young people in general remembered incidental events from their confirmation preparation rather than their catechesis. This supports the coordinators' and catechists' concerns about confirmation preparation, resourcing and catechist training. The responses from the young people suggest that continuing youth ministry is a way forward but not a complete solution to making confirmation catechesis relevant to the continuing faith life of young people. The data demonstrated that some coordinators and catechists judge that young people often do not understand what it means to 'be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit'. Furthermore some coordinators, catechists and the programmes they use are generally unclear about the 'seal of the Spirit'. The young people themselves are also unclear about what it means to receive the Holy Spirit at confirmation. They are vaguely aware that they have been strengthened but may well be unaware that they have been indelibly marked in a way that transforms them and cannot be undone. They are aware that they are adult members of the Church but see their faith more as a matter of choice than a matter of personal responsibility for developing their relationship with Jesus through prayer, the sacraments and mission in the Church. The reasons for this confusion are partly the key challenges of unevangelized young people and poor resources but the interviews also revealed a concern for the lack of training amongst catechists. The catechists' and coordinators' views of the young peoples' understanding of the seal of the Spirit also revealed a sense of confusion about exactly what it means to 'be sealed' and how far it might be important.